THE 2000s ISSUE

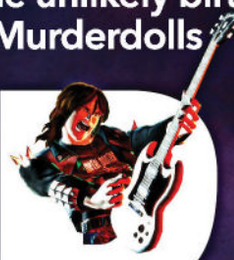
DIMEBAG DARRELL
Inside his final year

NU METAL
The anthems. The fashion. The celebrities

JACKASS
Steve-O: "They locked me up"

JOEY JORDISON
And the unlikely birth of Murderdolls

METAL HAMMER



THE 50 ALBUMS THAT DEFINED THE DECADE

THE ALBUMS • THE BANDS • THE STORIES

THE 00s

+ GUITAR HERO. MYSPACE. METALOCALYPSE. METAL VS BUSH. DAVE GROHL'S PROBOT.

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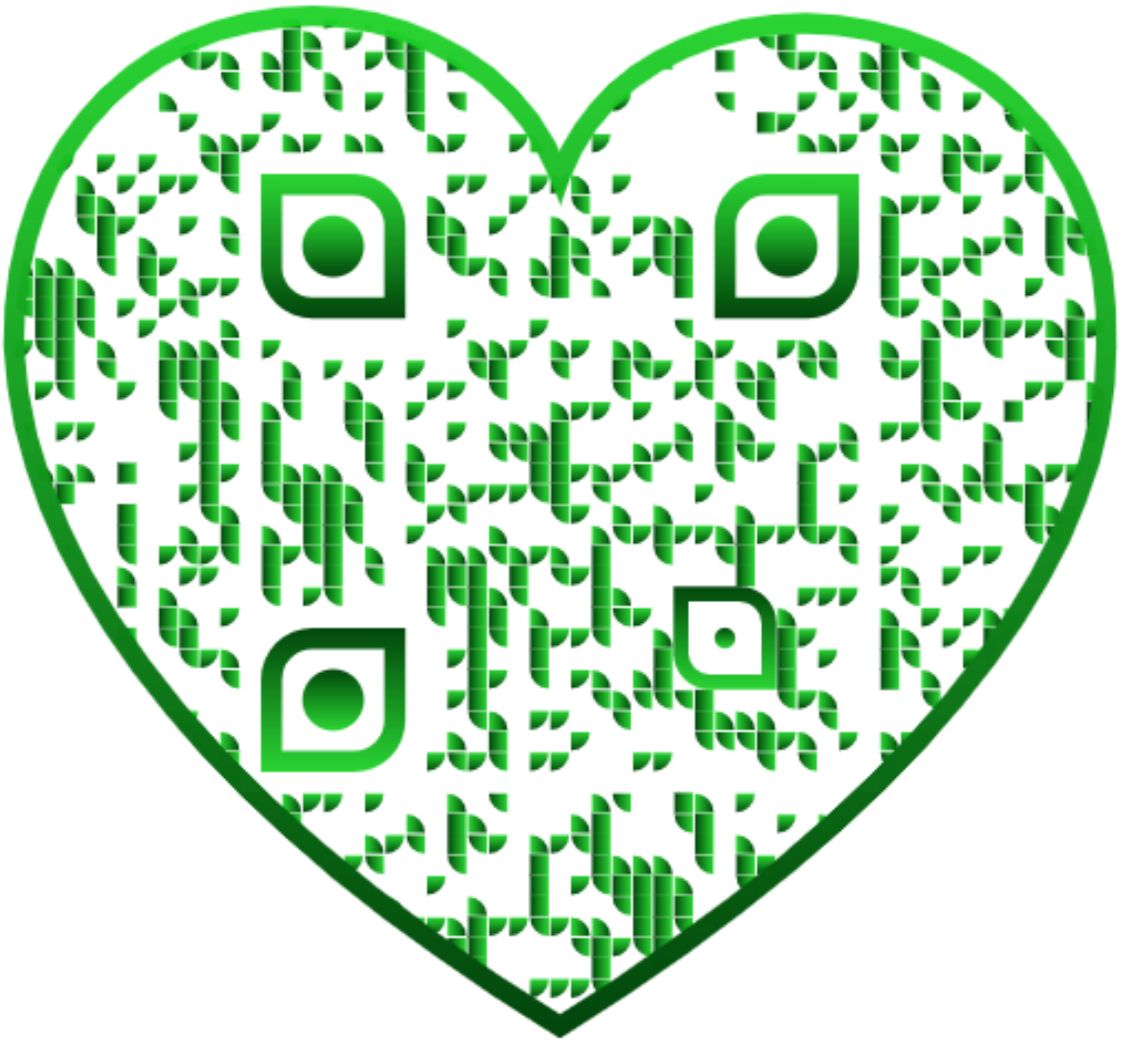
ISSUE 377



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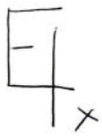
I WAS A TEENAGE NU METALLER

IN THE EARLY 00s I spent Monday nights at the Ritz in Manchester, an old ballroom with a sprung dancefloor, perfect for bouncing around to Limp Bizkit and Papa Roach. On Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays – sometimes all three – I went to Jilly's Rockworld for more of the same. For older metallers, nu metal was something to make fun of or ignore. But for our generation, in the club, classroom or park in our baggy jeans, it was *everything* – as Svalbard's Serena Cherry and more remember in this month's massive takeover feature. It also went stratospheric: Fred Durst and Christina Aguilera duetting on TV? Linkin Park's *Hybrid Theory* basically becoming the biggest-selling record on the planet? Sure.

But the 2000s wasn't just about nu metal. The New Wave Of American Heavy Metal and metalcore swept in, symphonic metal came of age, classic bands Maiden and Priest got Bruce and Rob back. In pop culture, we had the likes of *Jackass*, *Guitar Hero*, *Metalocalypse*, MySpace and a slew of heavy film soundtracks. If the 80s was OTT and the 90s was alternative, the 00s was the decade where metal breached the mainstream in a way we haven't seen since. Whatever your age, we hope you enjoy this snapshot.

Stay metal,

El



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MEET THE BAND

PAUL TRAVERS
WRITER
Paul's been a music journalist for more than three decades, and this month sat down with the Cavalera brothers for us (p.12). He was a D&D nerd before it was cool and is currently in thrall to a Staffie-cross pup named Henry.

LIZ SCARLETT
WRITER
We stole Lizzie from *Hammer*'s parent website, Louder, and took her to Download's 20th anniversary. She wrote some killer reviews (p.96) and partied heroically before being slayed by a stomach bug. Get well soon, Lizzie!

ALICE PATTILLO
WRITER
Hammer's former online editor, Alice is now Future's bookazine editor for all things spooky, pagan and generally uncanny. So who better to cover a festival called Mystic? We sent her to Poland to have the time of her life (p.102).

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MICK HUTSON

1965 – 2023

From stopping New York traffic for Metallica to getting Dimebag Darrell into a stretch Hummer, we remember the *Hammer* photographer who made some of metal's most iconic images

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

MICK HUTSON, CELEBRATED music photographer, died on Thursday, June 1, 2023, aged 58.

Mick was especially known for his work for *Metal Hammer* and he photographed many of the biggest names in music, his pictures used on official album releases by Nirvana, AC/DC, Queens Of The Stone Age, Judas Priest and more.

Mick was born in Newcastle in May 1965 and grew up in Aberdeen. When he left school he worked on the North Sea oil rigs: 12 hours a day, 14 days on, 14 days off. On LinkedIn, he lists his occupation back then as "roughneck": slang for an unskilled labourer on the drill floor. The *Collins* dictionary says that a roughneck is someone who is "not gentle or polite and can be violent" – that's not even close to being a fair description of Mick, who was known for his good humour and charm.

In fact, he once told *Digital Camera World* magazine that "the real secret of my photography, if there is one, is charm. Charming the PRs into a few more minutes with the band, charming the artist to let me photograph them somewhere other than the hotel corridor, and charming the tour manager to let me stay that little

Shooting Skindred as the A-Team, Docklands, London, in 2013

PORTRAIT: SHUTTERSTOCK/MICK HUTSON

Metallica in 2003. Not pictured: irate taxi drivers and utter carnage. All Mick's fault...

A stunning Slash shot by the master

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

bit longer in the photographers' pit at a gig. It's all about constant negotiation."

He left the oil rigs to do a Master's degree in Photography and Film and then went to work for the famous music photographer David Redfern. "I learned a lot – a huge amount – in the couple of years I was with him," he said in a YouTube interview. Striking out on his own, his break came when his sensational pictures of Grace Jones were used in *The Sun*'s *Bizarre* column. Suddenly his phone started to ring. "From having no money I ended up making 10 grand in two days," he said. "The next commission I got was from *Select* magazine to go on tour with U2."

His pictures appeared in all of the big music magazines of the time and he became *Metal Hammer*'s go-to photographer. Chris Ingham worked with Mick for nearly 30 years as Editor and Publisher of *Metal Hammer* and beyond.

"When I was asked to edit *Metal Hammer*," Chris says, "I went on a three-week road trip with Mick, criss-crossing the USA, forging a new look and identity for the magazine in the nu metal era. Mick was the man who made it come true."

When the magazine launched the *Metal Hammer* Golden Gods Awards show, it was Mick they turned to: "He thrived on the creative chaos," recalls Chris.

That chaos included bundling Nikki Sixx, Dimebag Darrell and Ville Valo into the back of a stretch Hummer for a cover shoot, Dimebag and Nikki tossing champagne glasses at Mick as he snapped away. It was a Monday night and Dimebag had been on a bender since the weekend's Download festival.

Jamie Hibbard was *Metal Hammer* Editor at the time. "I was sitting next to Mick for the whole shoot," he says, "Nikki throwing champagne flutes at him, Dimebag roaring drunk having been 'on it' at Download all weekend, Ville amused and slightly bewildered to be in between the pair of them as they caused as much havoc as possible.

"All the champagne flutes smashed around Mick as he shot – he was laughing the whole time, fully into capturing the unfolding scene before him. The consummate pro."

Mick did dozens of cover shoots for *Hammer*, and many of the shoots became iconic, like this spread's shot of Metallica walking in the middle of the street in downtown Manhattan. It was 2003, *St. Anger* was about to be released, and there were tensions in the band.

"Hutson nailed it," says Chris Ingham. "After the separate headshots for the cover, he challenged the band to get out of the studio and into natural light. 'You want to put Metallica out on the streets of New York?' asked James Hetfield."

Mick persuaded them, and soon Metallica were walking the streets of Manhattan and attracting crowds.

"Within 60 seconds NYPD appeared on horseback," says Chris. "One of them shouted, 'Hey, Metallica, you want me to close the fuckin' street down?' He meant it. So did Mick. The cop radioed his mate at the other end of the street and they brought two patrol cars across the top of it and literally closed down NYC.

"The shit hit the fan: horns blared, people stopped their motors dead, a cabbie was jumping up and down on his car cursing all us 'assholes', people leaned out of windows to take photos, shouting, whistling, chants of ''Tallica! 'Tallica!'"

The famous shot has Lars pointing at the camera. He was saying: "Look at all this chaos! It's all your fault, Mick!"

"That's a moment for the ages," says Chris. "Engineered, captured and delivered by a master of mayhem."

"Mick was a physical representation of what *Metal Hammer* strives to be," says James Isaacs, Art Director of the magazine from 2006-16. "Creative, fun, interesting and surprising. Working with him was never boring and he thrived being in the eye of the storm, right where the action was.

"When the *Metal Hammer* Golden Gods Awards came around, he could always be found holding court in his

Getting up close and personal with Henry Rollins

photo studio, greeting metal legends like old friends, their faces lighting up when they saw him. But he was like that with everyone. Not just Robb Flynn or Ozzy or Lars Ulrich, but with every person who was lucky to have met him."

Sarah Hards knew Mick as a teenager and went on to work with him for years as Art Editor at *Metal Hammer*. "Anyone who's worked with Mick will tell you what a talented, professional, down-to-earth and friendly character he was," she says. "He always went above and beyond to deliver. The attention to detail was meticulous: tracking ambient lighting and camera angles so people looked like they were standing next to each other, even though they were shot on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Always finding superb solutions to complex shots when Photoshop was still in its infancy."

In an interview he was asked to explain the difference between a great photograph and an ordinary one. "A great photograph is not taken," he said, "it's given to you." And Mick would work hard to win trust and get that gift.

"He would always, annoyingly, push whatever brief had been placed before him," says Chris Ingham. "But he always got 'the' shot, even if it was one that you hadn't thought of."

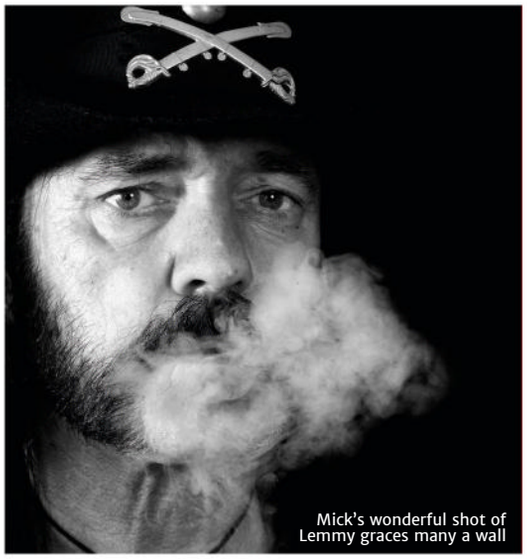
"Photography is all about control," Mick told *Digital Camera World*, "whether it's controlling the light or controlling the situation with your subjects. Never be scared of trying something new, or chucking the original commission out of the window if it's not appropriate to the situation. Some of my best pictures have come from tearing the brief up."

He tore it up all right. When budgets on music magazines shrank, he set up his own gallery, and took up travel photography and reportage, travelling to "post-conflict areas" in an effort to capture the results of conflict and war. He photographed child soldiers in Rwanda and travelled with a reporter in Afghanistan. On one of the trips, says Sarah Hards, "they were trekking through mountains when Mick became very ill from a local parasite. He told me he almost died and that it had quite an impact on his outlook. He just grabbed life by the horns."

Chris Ingham has an even more amazing story: "Did you know that he was kidnapped by Tuaregs on one of his adventures in Africa? ISIS came to claim him and the Tuaregs refused to give him up because he'd taken such good photos of their kids." His charm and his talent had saved his life.

In his personal life, says Sarah Hards, for all of his reputation as a 'party boy,' he loved his family and adored his children. "He was brave and made no secrets of his struggle with bipolar, at a time when mental health still has a stigma attached."

GETTY/MICK HUTSON



Mick's wonderful shot of Lemmy graces many a wall

Ozzy, by Mick. Metal royalty saw Mick as an old friend

Playing with fire: Architects shot for January 2018's issue of *Metal Hammer*

Alexander Milas worked on *Metal Hammer* from 2006, leaving his role as Editor in Chief in 2016. "There is a special bond between photographers and writers," he says. "You'd meet a stranger in an airport and spend the next 72 hours in tight quarters. You would have to be an unimaginative person to not relish the chance to travel around the world while most people are sat at their desks, and Mick Hutson was never unimaginative. He was a vagabond and an adventurer at heart, tough as nails, sensitive as could be at times, but he always delivered, and he was never, ever boring."

He's left us with some astonishing photography and a whole load of stories. Jamie Hibbard remembers helping Mick set up a makeshift studio in *Hammer*'s old Baker Street office to shoot Velvet Revolver's Scott Weiland.

"Scott rocked up in a very tightly fitting suit and then asked if there was somewhere he could smoke," says Jamie. "I took him out to the car park and as we were smoking, he looked down at his crotch and asked, 'Can you see my cock in this?' I inhaled sharply, then muttered, 'Yes.'

"'Good,' he said.

"When we came back up, I told Mick what had happened. He said: 'You've just got to roll with the punches in this game, son.'"

We could fill many, many issues with his pictures, but here is a small selection. There are plenty more throughout this magazine. Rest in peace, Mick.

Nikki Sixx, Ville Valo and Dimebag Darrell wreaking havoc in a Hummer at *Hammer*'s Golden Gods in 2004

GETTY/MICK HUTSON X3

THE HOT TOPIC

SABBATH BALLET SABBATH

Black Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi has teamed up with Birmingham Royal Ballet for the world's first full heavy metal production

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

PRESS/PEROU. IOMMI & ACOSTA: PRESS/DREW TOMMONS

TONY IOMMI IS the first to admit that the worlds of Black Sabbath and ballet aren't natural bedfellows. But when he was approached by Carlos Acosta, the director for the Royal Ballet company in his hometown of Birmingham, with the idea of creating a ballet based on Black Sabbath's music and career, he knew he couldn't pass up the opportunity.

"I knew basically nothing about ballet," the legendary guitarist admits. "But I loved Carlos's approach – to go out to do something he believes in. It's what we did when we started and that's the belief I've always had with our music."

"I wanted to do something nobody else ever had," Carlos adds. "Tony has given us his blessing from the very beginning, so we really appreciate that we've been able to create this in conjunction with him."

"WE'RE TAKING THE BALLET INTO AN ENTIRELY OTHER WORLD"

TONY IOMMI

Set to premiere at the Birmingham Hippodrome on September 23, before moving on in October to Plymouth's Theatre Royal and Sadler's Wells in London later that month, *Black Sabbath – The Ballet* will feature eight songs taken from the first five Sabbath records, with massive hits *Paranoid, Iron Man, Black Sabbath, Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* and *War Pigs* sitting alongside more choice cuts *Solitude, Orchid* and *Laguna Sunrise*. Rather than just reproducing Sabbath's sound, lead composer Chris Austin has been working closely with Iommi on orchestral re-imaginings of the songs.

"I honestly thought they would only want the softer songs, like *Changes, Laguna Sunrise* and all those, then they picked *Iron Man*!" Tony says with a laugh. "It's a great Black Sabbath song but I didn't know how it was going to work, and when I saw that it *would* I was delighted, because these songs are the ones the fans will want too."

"We never started from the point of thinking 'Let's do a greatest hits show', it's about how we create this new thing entirely," Chris says. "It's taking everyone on their journey. We wanted to open the door fully on the lyrical and instrumental side of Sabbath."

Any apprehensions about how the worlds of ballet and heavy metal would collide clearly didn't affect interest in the project, with Birmingham tickets selling out entirely as soon as they went on sale, while many of the other dates are close to following suit.

"Well, I'm sitting on about 10,000 tickets…" Tony jokes. "The barrier that was always there when we started is gone – we've opened it. Our fans, ballet fans – they're the same so far as this project is concerned. I'm really excited."

Tony's enthusiasm is matched by the cast and crew behind the project. In the first public dress rehearsal in May, held for a select gathering of ballet patrons and media, one of the dancers couldn't resist running up to an overseeing Tony to breathlessly announce, "I love your music!" In much the same way as Tony admits he knew nothing about ballet prior to working on the project, the creative team have found themselves diving deep into the history of heavy metal and the role Black Sabbath have played, even appointing Home Of Metal curator Lisa Meyer as a 'Metal Curator'.

"It's a great idea in general, but even better to be working on it all together," Tony admits.

Carlos Acosta, the director of Birmingham's Royal Ballet, alongside a familiar face

"There's a joy in knowing there are people who will never meet in real life but can connect to each other through this art," Chris agrees.

Black Sabbath – The Ballet won't just explore the story of the band, but the impact they've had on the wider world. Dramaturg [the writer who composes the ballet's narrative – Ballet Ed] Richard Thomas explains that they will use clips recorded by the band's members – including heavy metal's original power couple, Sharon and Ozzy Osbourne – alongside soundbites from Sabbath fans. Although companies like Ballet Deviare have incorporated heavy metal into their soundtracks in the past, *Black Sabbath – The Ballet* represents the first time a fully fledged ballet has been created from the ground up in connection with a metal band. But then, considering the past 53 years have seen metal subsume everything from classical music to movies and theatre, perhaps it was inevitable that metal would eventually take on high society with ballet.

"Well, I don't have world domination as an ultimate goal…" says lead choreographer Pontus Lidberg. "But a ballet company can be so many things and metal is very much the same, growing wherever it may go. After the opening night, I'd like to hear people say they'd seen something they'd never seen before. We want to surprise the audience; we're trying to create something out of these ingredients and create something new."

"We're taking the ballet into an entirely other world, giving it new life," Tony agrees, a proud smile spreading across his face. MH

***BLACK SABBATH – THE BALLET* IS AT BIRMINGHAM'S HIPPODROME SEPTEMBER 23–30, PLYMOUTH'S THEATRE ROYAL OCTOBER 12–14, AND LONDON'S SADLER'S WELLS OCTOBER 18–21**

DOLLY AND ROB: GETTY.

10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

DOLLY PARTON AND ROB HALFORD HAVE DONE A DUET!
Bygones comes from Dolly's upcoming *Rockstar* album.

CRAIG JONES HAS LEFT SLIPKNOT...
The band announced the keyboardist/sampler's departure online, only to later remove the post.

...AND THE BAND HAVE A NEW KEYBOARDIST
He made his debut with the band in Europe, with Corey saying he's "killing it".

Dolly and Rob: the duet we never knew we needed!

DANI FILTH HAS SLAMMED SPOTIFY
By Dani's reckoning, Cradle Of Filth had about 26 million plays last year... and earned just £20. Ooft.

BIRMINGHAM'S GIANT MECHANICAL BULL IS CALLED OZZY
It was created for the opening ceremony of the 2022 Commonwealth Games, and has now been named via a public vote.

METALLICA HATE GATEKEEPERS
When someone tried to dunk on YouTuber Ally The Piper for her bagpipe takes on Metallica classics, the band stepped in: "This guy doesn't speak on our behalf."

FOO FIGHTERS PLAYED THE LEAST SECRET SET EVER AT GLASTONBURY
'The ChurnUps'? Yeah, right... pull the other one, Dave.

...AND THEN ANNOUNCED A BIG TOUR
Dave Grohl and co. will play UK stadiums in June 2024, their first set of dates since 2018.

SLIPKNOT'S ORIGINAL VOCALIST IS TOURING *MATE. FEED. KILL. REPEAT* IN FULL
Anders Colsefni has said the tour is in honour of Joey Jordison and Paul Gray.

LOCALS THINK DOWNLOAD'S TOO LOUD
The festival got hit with noise complaints from Derbyshire residents. We guess it was turned up to 11, eh?

WHY DID YOU FIGHT SO MUCH?

Max and Iggor Cavalera unite to tackle your questions about brotherly love, celebrity fans and the possibility of a Sepultura reunion

WORDS: PAUL TRAVERS

IT'S BEEN ALMOST 40 years since brothers Max and Iggor Cavalera founded Sepultura, and their influence can be found in everyone from Gojira to The Hu. The pair have long since left the band, but recent tours playing classic Seps material – and all-new re-recordings of *Bestial Devastation* and *Morbid Visions* – are a timely reminder that the metal landscape wouldn't be the same without their contribution. But how will they fare against a grilling from *Hammer* readers?

I'm so happy you guys made up. How did that happen?
Aliss E, email

Iggor: "After a few years without speaking to each other, we just decided that life was too short. My first intention wasn't to make music, it was just to be together with him as family. But Max is a workaholic and he never stops thinking about music."

Max: "I think we both learned from it. We don't take our brotherhood for granted now and it's stronger than it was. Everything we do together now, we try to minimise the stress and go for the pure enjoyment of the moment."

Why did you used to fight so much?
Andre Beemsterboer, Facebook

Max: "It's a mix of Italian and Brazilian blood – that's a bad mix! Ha ha ha! But fighting is essential to growth. You can't just say yes to everything. If you're brothers and you don't fight, there's something wrong with your family!"

***Hammer*: What's the worst fight you guys ever had?**

Iggor: "It was probably when we were kids. The first time he broke his tooth was because I tripped him playing football. I remember playing on a construction site and him throwing cement in my face. I was blind for five days and had to go to hospital."

When you hear bands like The Hu incorporating Mongolian folk instruments, or Gojira incorporating native instruments from the Amazon, does that stir a sense of fatherly pride in expanding and globalising metal?
Jo Fleisher, Twitter

Iggor: "Yeah, I think that was the idea. With *Roots* it was about going deep into our Brazilian roots and that resonated everywhere, including Norwegian black metal, where people went back to their own roots and started incorporating pagan themes. One of the biggest things with *Roots* was to kick that door open and when I see the bands you just mentioned, it makes me super-proud."

The classic Sepultura line-up (left to right): Iggor Cavalera, Andreas Kisser, Paulo Jr, Max Cavalera

Of all the bands you've toured with, who were the biggest liability?
Foo Manchu, Facebook

Iggor: "Pantera. We toured with them at the peak of their tours when they had a lot of money to experiment with things and were drinking a lot of alcohol. It really felt like anything could happen."

Max: "I'd go with The Dillinger Escape Plan, because they were chaos on the stage every night. It was very exciting to watch, because you knew crazy shit was going to go down. They'd throw amplifiers in the crowd or Greg Puciato would be jumping from the balconies."

Do you still practise Candomblé?
Sof Lynch, email

Iggor: "It's more of my mom's thing. She's very spiritual with the mixing up of Brazilian and African culture so she practises more. Me and Max don't really practise but we respect it. I always ask my mom for advice on things and she puts some energy into it."

Max: "I'm fascinated by the whole movement. To really feel it you have to be in Brazil and the places where those rituals happen. It's a real powerful connection with the spiritual world."

Will we ever see/hear Nailbomb again?
Jordy Molnár, Facebook

Max: "I don't know if I can convince Alex [Newport, Nailbomb co-founder]▶

PRESS. INSET: GETTY

“WE DON’T TAKE OUR BROTHERHOOD FOR GRANTED”

MAX CAVALERA

Iggor and Max are re-recording Seps classics under the Cavalera name

to make a full record, but we did play live with his blessing. I'm a 'never say never' kind of guy, so if we could do it, that would be really cool."

[Sepultura songs] *Desperate Cry* and *Inner Self* were in [2006 comedy film] *Talladega Nights: The Ballad Of Ricky Bobby*. Did you meet Will Ferrell?
Jeff Beers, Facebook
Iggor: "I wish! I'm a big fan but we didn't really have any involvement with the movie or anything like that."

***Hammer*: Who's the biggest celebrity fan you've met?**
Max: "I did the screams [for The Rock's Scorpion King character] on *The Mummy Returns*, so we met the cast. I also met Javier Bardem. He'd just won the Oscar for Best Actor [in 2008] and was hanging around backstage when Cavalera Conspiracy were out with Rage Against The Machine in Spain. He said he was a big fan of my work."

Are you going to do another Cavalera Conspiracy album?
Idir, Twitter
Max: "Eventually. One of the ideas was to do an EP. One of my favourite EPs ever was [Slayer's] *Haunting The Chapel* and we'd like to do our own version with three songs and just make it as brutal and exciting as it can be."

There's hints of admiration for early black metal in 80s Sepultura. Are there any recent black metal bands you guys enjoy?
Francisco Moura, Facebook
Iggor: "There's a lot of young bands taking black metal but mixing some really cool stuff with it, like Periodeater and Blackbraid. There's a whole wave of Native American bands mixing those rhythms with black metal, which again is something we can mirror a bit to *Roots*."
Max: "Even here in America there's Wolves In The Throne Room. Our good friends Dark Funeral have been putting out great stuff since forever."

What are your personal favourite Sepultura albums and why?
Mike Lumnah, Facebook
Max: "*Chaos A.D.*, because we were up against it on that record. There was an explosion of grunge and nobody wanted anything to do with metal. We made a record that was very metal and also a transition from the death or thrash of the earlier records and a different way to be heavy. My first son was born and his heartbeat opens the record. It was a magical and very inspiring time."

"MAX THREW CEMENT IN MY FACE. I WAS BLIND FOR FIVE DAYS"
IGGOR CAVALERA

Reunited, and it feels so good

Max, what did you do with your dread when you cut it off?
Polly Kray, email
Max: "I gave it to [my wife] Gloria, the family archivist. We have tapes and guitars that she's kept for me so the dread is… somewhere, I think. I'm glad to be rid of it, it feels great not to have that thing on my head anymore!"

Of all the songs you wrote together, which is your favourite to play live?
Jeremy Alcock, Facebook
Max: "I really enjoyed playing *Stronger Than Hate* on the Beneath Arise tour. It had everything that I like about the death and thrash era that was very inspirational on those records."
Iggor: "It's cool, because on these tours we're revisiting a lot of songs that we never played before. I can't wait to play *Warriors Of Death* from *Bestial Devastation* live and see the reaction."

You both love football – apart from the obvious Pelé, who are your favourite players past and present?
Paul Melvin, Facebook
Iggor: "Pelé was a bit of a Jimi Hendrix, he was so different to other players. But I've seen a lot of cool players like Ronaldinho [Gaúcho] who was another freak, if I can put it like that."
Max: "We got to meet Pelé and it was mind-blowing. We told him the name of the band, which means 'Grave', and he said something like, 'That's a terrible name!' But just the fact that he acknowledged us was amazing."

Will you ever return to Sepultura?
Mike Villa Real, Facebook
Iggor: "We've got a little tired of talking about this. I have my full desire to play with Max and if it happens for the right reasons, it happens. If it doesn't, I'm also cool with it."
Max: "We're so happy with the way we are doing things now that I don't see the need. It might even be for the best that we keep the original as a sacred thing. But I don't have a crystal ball, so I don't know what will happen in the future."

Looking back on your careers, what would you do differently?
Vivacious Nonage, Twitter
Iggor: "Nothing. Changing the past could end up working against you – you'd never learn from your mistakes."
Max: "I agree, I don't regret anything. For one thing I'm very lucky to be alive after all the things I've done. It's a whole learning process that's led me to where I stand today, and I'm in a really great frame of mind these days."

CAVALERA'S *BESTIAL DEVASTATION* AND *MORBID VISIONS* ARE OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST

PRESS

BRING ME THE HORIZON
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STATIC DRESS
NX_GN WRLD TOUR
UNITED KINGDOM › IRELAND › JAN 2024 › PREPARE URSELF
20_
24_
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~~10/01 BOURNEMOUTH SOLD OUT INTERNATIONAL CENTRE~~
~~12/01 BIRMINGHAM SOLD OUT UTILITA ARENA~~
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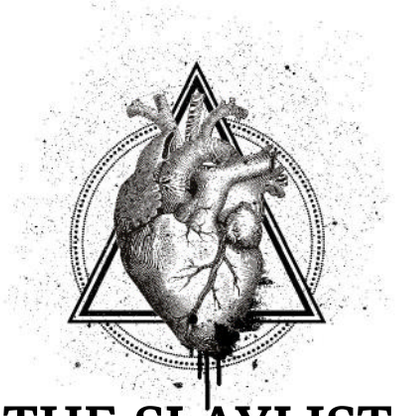

THE SLAYLIST

WOLFGANG VAN HALEN

From emo teen to Mammoth WVH mastermind, these songs have shaped the young Van Halen's life

WORDS: EMILY SWINGLE

There are many songs that remind Wolfgang of his late, great father

LISTEN NOW
To hear Wolfgang's choices, head to tinyurl.com/WolfVHSlaylist

"I FIGURED I'D start with a song from my own band, **MAMMOTH WVH**, *Distance*. It's special to me, not only because it's for my father, but it's the first song we ever released. It marked a huge turning point in my life, being my own artist [Wolfgang previously played bass in his late father's band Van Halen, and Tremonti]. There's a lot looming over me in terms of what people expect, so finding my own voice was the thing I wanted to accomplish most.

"**FOO FIGHTERS** are one of the biggest inspirations for the project, and *Stacked Actors* is probably my favourite track of theirs. It's got these relaxing verses, but it's simultaneously one of their heavier songs. During the rehearsals for the Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concert, I ended up sitting on the drum kit in the studio and playing this song with the band. It was amazing, playing a track I love with musicians that I've looked up to my whole life.

"**INTERVALS**' Aaron Marshall is one of my favourite guitar players alive. Currently, he's one of my biggest inspirations. *5-HTP* is a song I think I've played more than anything, to the point where my fiancée now hums it all the time. It's become a part of our relationship in terms of the melody. I wish I'd wrote it. Attempting to play **TOOL** has also helped me become an infinitely better musician. When I learned *Ænema* on drums, I noticed an immediate change in my skills once I started trying to mimic Danny Carey.

"**MESHUGGAH** are my favourite band, and when I first heard *Born In Dissonance*, I was obsessed. I was blasting it in the car once trying to teach my fiancée about polyrhythms, and she was getting so frustrated. So I ended up taking her to the studio, and it led to me writing my song *Like A Pastime*. She understands what polyrhythms are now… to a point.

"ATTEMPTING TO PLAY TOOL HELPED ME BECOME A BETTER MUSICIAN"

"*The Middle* may be one of **JIMMY EAT WORLD**'s biggest songs, but I don't think people appreciate how great that guitar solo is. I performed it for my 12th grade arts fair, and it was the first time I had ever publicly performed. Growing up and being a little emo teenager, the lyrics really spoke to me. During that time, **SYSTEM OF A DOWN** also had a huge impact. Me and my friend Ethan would sit in math class, and we would sort of jam *Suite-Pee*, pretending to play the instruments. Teachers would move us further apart, but we'd still lock eyes and jam out across the classroom.

"It's a bit of a left turn, but **PETER GABRIEL**'s *Red Rain* will forever make me think of my father. One night he pulled me to the side and put these big headphones on my tiny seven-year-old head. Then he just blasted this song, and it was one of the most powerful music experiences I've ever had. Just sitting there on the floor, Peter Gabriel blasting in my ears 'til it hurt. My dad also played me a track on a trip to the Grand Canyon. Him and my mum took me out of school for a week and I just remember we were pulled over, my mom had gotten out the car, and my dad goes, "Hey, listen to this…" And he put on the song *Big Balls* by **AC/DC**. It made me laugh so hard. It made me fall in love with Bon Scott and his tone.

"**NINE INCH NAILS** are another of my main inspirations. *With Teeth* is one of my favourite albums by them, and *The Collector* in particular I love. My father usually wasn't always super into music I'd show him, but when I showed him this song, he was all about it. It's a very raw, aggressive rock song, which is pretty rare to hear from Nine Inch Nails. They're usually really about the electronic dissonance. But it was always great when my dad's ears would perk up… It was nice to be able to do that sort of thing in return, you know?"

***MAMMOTH II* IS OUT AUGUST 4 VIA BMG**

PRESS

IN THE STUDIO

WITHIN TEMPTATION

The Dutch symphonic legends set their sights on bright new stylistic horizons

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

Sharon wants to try some "drastic change" in Within Temptation's music

MORE THAN 25 years since they helped define symphonic metal, Within Temptation are still pushing boundaries creatively. 2019's *Resist* incorporated more electronic elements into their sound, but a series of stand-alone singles has suggested the band are pushing the boat out even more with its follow-up. We caught up with vocalist Sharon den Adel and guitarist/vocalist Robert Westerholt to find out what lies in store…

You've called this album the 'start of a new era'. What does that mean?
Sharon: "We're trying to find a new sound for ourselves. And we're really interested in all these radical changes happening in the world right now and how they affect our lives, like with AI."
Robert: "We're freer than we've ever been, and really enjoying experimenting. It's also a new era in the styles of music we're exploring."

As artists, how does AI affect you? Have you tried to see if a programme could write a Within Temptation song?
Sharon: "We haven't used AI at all when it comes to the music, but we used it a little for visualising things like the album cover and videos."
Robert: "I can't imagine ever using it when we're songwriting. It's very interesting, though! It feels like a complete revolution, not only artistically, but in terms of what this AI could represent technologically. Scary, but exciting!"
Sharon: "It's an opportunity to find new methods of creativity. We've still used a designer for our cover so we're not cutting out people, but we've used this technology to better express what we wanted and make it easier for them."

What's the biggest surprise for fans on this new album?
Sharon: "Every time you listen to the songs, you'll discover more. There's lots of layers of diversity in the songs."
Robert: "We've found a real love for the album [format] again and we're trying to tell a story."

Is there a concept behind the lyrics?
Robert: "There are a few themes rather than one concept, some being quite peripheral. Socially, we're taking note of things happening in the world. The war in Ukraine had a big impact on us – we've played there quite a few times and felt like we got to know fans there, but also it's really not far from our doors."
Sharon: "And if it doesn't stop in Ukraine, it could be at our doorsteps a year later. There are lots of sports personalities we used to follow on social media from the Ukraine, like Alexandr Dolgopolov, a great tennis player who's become a soldier to fight for his home. Ultimately, as musicians we tell stories and there are so many stories now coming at us."

Are there any artists or records that have directly inspired the album?
Robert: "I've found myself going for bands who go through these drastic, radical things in their songs. Songs with a lot of contrast are more exciting, more inspiring. I want to hear a record that can go from reggae to black metal!"
Sharon: "Drastic change is something we want to try. Who knows what kind of cool things could come out of that?"

How representative is single *Wireless* of the rest of the album?
Robert: "There are a lot of elements we're using in the new album on that track, melodically and rhythmically. Parts of this record are ultra-heavy. The contrast across the record helps those parts feel even heavier, too. There is even a bit of djenty stuff in there."
Sharon: "It's the first time we've been able to go in and make adjustments to tiny bits within a song. We've tried in the past, but this feels like we've found a good method for getting those parts to fit together properly. I think this will be the last 'traditional' WT record."
Robert: "Every fucking metal band says 'This is our heaviest album', but for us, this is our most exciting album." H

THE NEW ALBUM IS DUE LATER THIS YEAR VIA FORCE MUSIC

THE FACTS

ALBUM: 8

STUDIO: Various home studios

PRODUCER: Daniel Gibson

EXPECT: An empowering, genre-blurring epic with symphonic undertones

PRESS

LIFE LESSONS

JOE DUPLANTIER

The Gojira vocalist reflects on what pop music, family and activism have taught him

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL • PICTURES: GABRIELLE DUPLANTIER

SINCE FORMING GOJIRA with his brother Mario in 1996, Joe Duplantier has proved himself a modern metal icon. He's sensitive, thoughtful and passionate about the preservation of the environment, not to mention a modern guitar hero and a riff machine, responsible for a back catalogue of stunning, crushingly brutal death metal-inspired bangers. But what has the great man learned throughout all of it? "I'm nearly 50 and I'm still continuing to learn and grow," he tells us by way of introduction, as we catch up over Zoom. These are the teachings that have steered him best so far…

EMPATHY IS KEY

"As a kid I was struck by the interaction between people, how they choose not to relate, how they don't listen to each other, how they try to step on each other. The competition, you know? I was always full of questions, and I was always drawn to justice and respect. I always wanted to work out how to best react to people, to just not be a toxic person. I had this quest to seek truth, but it doesn't mean I have any answers!"

EVERY HUMAN BEING IS WORTHY OF RESPECT

"I started writing at 13, 14 years old. I was writing poems. I was bullied in school because I was too sensitive, and kids sense that and they break you. It's easy to break the confidence of a child. If anyone has been through that, they need to remember that they're worthy of this life. We are the result of millions of years of stars exploding and galaxies colliding. We need to remember that, and think, 'I am an achievement already.' Just by being born you are a miracle."

EVEN THE SMALLEST ACT CAN BE ACTIVISM

"I went down to the beach when I was young, and I realised it really isn't that hard to go and spend the day picking up some plastic and putting it in bags. When I did that, I saw that people were watching and wondering what I was doing. So, there is a political act in doing that: people see you and it makes them think. Suddenly they reappraise a situation they had never thought about before."

EVERYTHING YOU DO HAS AN IMPACT

"I asked my friends and my bandmates to come down to the beach and do something with me. I had the idea to go and clean up the beach, put the rubbish in plastic bags, and dump it in the parking lot of the mayor's office. We did that, it was in the 90s, and the next day it was in the news. 'Someone took all the rubbish from the beach and put it in the parking lot with a note!' It was interesting. You understand that everything you do has an impact; even if it's a small thing, it can inspire someone else. That was a huge moment for me, realising that we have an impact on the world around us – I think 70-80% of our lyrical message is that."

BEING AN OUTSIDER CAN SPUR YOU ON

"We grew up in a remote area [the commune Ondres in southwest France], cut off from any metal scene. The closest scene was two hours away, so we couldn't just go and see a show. We grew up in a bubble a little bit, and I think that helped us sound the way we do. But it is hard to know, of course. Maybe if we had grown up in a place like Seattle or New York or London, then Gojira would sound different, but we don't have access to that alternate universe timeline to know for certain. But I believe it helped us develop as ourselves, with very little outside influence."

IT'S GREAT TO BE EXPOSED TO MUSIC EARLY ON

"My parents weren't listening to metal or rock, certainly not hard rock. My mom, being American, was into Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, but also listened to a lot of jazz and African music, and my dad listened to a lot of radio, so I heard lots of Michael Jackson and Prince. We had a big room that my family would play music in… Mario and I were very young, so we were just dancing around, but I do remember very quickly I was interested in lyrics. From the music I was exposed to, I think Mike Oldfield was maybe the thing I listened to back then, which is closest to what we do. That might sound odd, but it's very mystical and unusual music."

RESPECT THE POLICE

"The Police and Sting inspired me. They managed to make something that is very catchy and popular, but if you listen to it then you can hear that it is actually very complex and intricate. It has this pattern that you can analyse and learn a lot from. They managed to do something that is amazing – you can't play that stuff, it's so intricate, but equally you can't help but sing along. Great technicality, great songwriting, there were a few things like that in my home. Queen, The Beatles… some amazing artists."

GOJIRA'S EARLY SHOWS MEANT EVERYTHING

"Our first shows were really us acquainting ourselves with the world. You know how you build your identity as a teenager, where you don't even know how to talk to adults because you don't quite know who you are yet? That was us back then. We weren't fully formed, but already we were screaming into a microphone. It forces you to bring the true you out of yourself. Every single show mattered; every single moment of every show meant something. After 15 years we started to forget things, 'Oh, we played here before!', but back then we could have told you everything we ate before the show, what we talked about, what we were wearing, everything. Every show was an event… it still is, but now we're much older!"

"WE ARE THE RESULT OF MILLIONS OF YEARS OF STARS EXPLODING AND GALAXIES COLLIDING"

Joe Duplantier: eco warrior and modern metal master

"I DON'T NEED A SONG TO REMIND ME THAT I LOST MY MOM"

NOTHING BEATS A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION

"We were aware of the importance of Download 2006. It was the first show where we knew our career could shift. Mastodon were originally booked, and we were not. They cancelled a month before, and a lot of people knew Download were looking for a band. We had played this show on the beach in Brighton, made an impression, and some people called Download and said, 'We've found your replacement.' I can remember the first notes of our opening song, *Ocean Planet*, resonating throughout the tent and thinking, 'This feels important.' It was when we were still surprising people. 'Oh, you don't know us? Well, get ready, you're about to know us!' I like that feeling."

WE ALL HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH MUSIC

"All of our songs are personal, but obviously the songs from [2016's] *Magma* do have that extra something as they relate to our mother dying. It's very therapeutic when we express our grief or sadness or anger and recycle it through music. It becomes this other thing."

BUT YOU CAN DEVELOP DISTANCE

"For me, it's easy to switch and look at a song and recognise it is just a song. Some of the songs, even going all the way back to [Gojira's 2001 debut] *Terra Incognita* or [2003's] *The Link*, are very personal to us. But I don't need a song to remind me that I lost my mom, and that she was young, and that I would have loved for her to see her grandchildren grow. I have to process that every day. But music is magical for that reason. You can listen to a song in many, many different ways and it will have a different meaning to every person. It's like a relationship – the piece can evolve with the experiences of the listener."

MEET YOUR HEROES

"Playing in Cavalera Conspiracy [from 2007–2008] was unbelievable. I grew up as a huge fan of Sepultura, and getting in a room with Iggor and Max after all those years of them not playing together was incredible. I remember Max saying to me, 'Joe, do you know how to play *Refuse/Resist*?' Only my whole life, you know? Ha ha! It's hard for me to really express just how incredible this experience was for me. It's the type of thing that you dream of in your wildest dreams as a kid, and it happened! I'll always be really grateful for that experience with those guys." MH

***FORTITUDE* IS OUT NOW VIA ROADRUNNER**

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THE STORY BEHIND

HALO
SOIL

How a bunch of ex-death metallers got over being gazumped by Disturbed to deliver one of the greatest rock club bangers of the 2000s

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

Soil (left to right): Tim King, Shaun Glass, Ryan McCombs, Adam Zadel, Tom Schofield

IN THE EARLY 2000s, it seemed like every band had at least one massive, floor-filling anthem in them, and Soil were no exception. The Chicago five-piece might have been musically and visually out of step with prevailing nu metal trends, but their 2001 single *Halo* became as inescapable a rock club banger as Drowning Pool's *Bodies* or Alien Ant Farm's cover of Michael Jackson's *Smooth Criminal*.

"When we wrote *Halo*, we never expected it to do as well as it did," admits bassist and founding member Tim King. "But people went apeshit."

Soil started as a side-project of Oppressor, a death metal band formed by Tim and guitarist Adam Zadel in the early 90s. They'd seen the underground metal scene changing, and they weren't keen on where it was heading.

"The Norwegian [black metal] scene became super-popular and guys were covering their faces in corpsepaint and singing about Satan," Tim recalls. "We weren't into that Satanic stuff and there was no way we were gonna paint our faces!"

Instead, Tim, Adam and drummer Tom Schofield drafted in guitarist Shaun Glass from fellow Chicago natives Broken Hope and gravel-throated vocalist Ryan McCombs to form Soil. They took their name from the old Entombed track *Rotten Soil*, and they shared a groove with the Swedish death'n'roll pioneers. They were death metal musicians playing the kind of music they'd grown up listening to.

"We wanted to get back to our roots," says Tim. "More early Metallica, Black Sabbath, Corrosion Of Conformity."

At the same time, nu metal was taking off and Soil found themselves swept up in the tide.

"We downtuned everything and got lumped in with that whole nu metal category," Tim admits. "We weren't really going for that at the time – more stoner rock with downtuned guitars I guess, but we were playing with bands like Disturbed and Chevelle and got included."

Soil's first show was the tipping point that took them from side-project to main concern. It took place at legendary Chicago club Metro on March 31, 1998, where they were opening a bill featuring Ultraspank, Far and headliners Incubus.

"It was completely sold out," Tim recalls. "[Incubus's second album] *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.* was blowing up. People just went crazy and we were like, 'Wow, maybe we have something here, maybe we've taken death metal as far as it can go.'"

Soil released their debut album, *Throttle Junkies*, the following year via independent label MIA. Although it failed to set the world on fire, it caught the attention of Larry Jacobson, an A&R executive with major label subsidiary Giant Records. After flying out to see Soil live, he was so impressed he offered them a deal. The only problem was that MIA weren't going to let them go for free.

"MIA wanted a million-dollar buy out," Tim recalls. "Larry took us out to dinner and told us, 'I flew out here to sign either you guys or Disturbed. After the show I just saw tonight, I really want you guys.' He said they could do maybe $100,000 and a share of the profits and our label said, 'No.' Giant ended up signing Disturbed and the rest is history."

To make matters worse, not only did MIA cost Soil a major record deal, the label folded two months after *Throttle Junkies* was released. Now unsigned, they knew they needed to act fast if they were going to survive. Aware that Disturbed had made a big splash with their debut album, *The Sickness*, Soil tapped up that record's producer, Johnny K, to help them work on new demos and refine their sound.

"*Throttle Junkies* was recorded by [famed underground producer] Steve Albini, but he just pushed play and captured us in this raw, energetic form," Tim explains. "At that point, we really needed some direction that we didn't get. Johnny K got hold of us and really helped us hone our sound, and we owe him so much for that."

The band worked on three songs with Johnny K – *Need To Feel*, *My Own* and their hit-in-the-making, *Halo*. While on the surface *Halo* appeared

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
2001

ALBUM:
Scars

PERSONNEL:
Ryan McCombs (vocals), Adam Zadel (guitar), Shaun Glass (guitar), Tim King (bass), Tom Schofield (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
#22 (US mainstream rock tracks)

PRESS

to explore a destructive relationship, Tim says that the song was actually a response to everything the band had experienced up to that point.

"Ryan wrote *Halo* about his love-hate relationship with the music industry," says the bassist. "He loved the music, the fans and going out to play, but he hated having to play the industry game in order to let your music be heard."

A demo version of *Halo* was uploaded to Demo Diaries, a website used by A&R reps to discover unsigned talent. Soil were soon contacted by someone from Atlantic Records wanting to release *Halo* to the Florida-based radio station WJRR to see if it would generate any buzz.

"It blew up," Tim gleefully recalls. "After that, every major label flew out to Chicago to make offers. Atlantic just couldn't match some of these offers we were getting in. We let the jackpot grow and grow until we signed with [legendary music mogul] Clive Davis at J Records and went back to the studio with Johnny K. While we were in the studio working on Scars, *Halo* was blowing up on radio. We had a hit single before we even put out the record."

Halo peaked at No.22 on Billboard's Mainstream Rock Tracks, though its parent album, *Scars*, didn't equal that success, peaking at No.193 on the Billboard 200. Though the fact that it was released on September 11, 2001 probably didn't help its chances.

"I WAS LITERALLY WALKING UP WALLS, HOOKED UP TO WIRES"
TIM KING

"*Scars* probably could have gone platinum if 9/11 hadn't happened," says Tim. "It was soaring on the radio, we're playing all these huge shows, and then on the day it came out I went to my local Walmart and there was absolutely nobody there. People were too afraid, so they just stayed home. And *Scars* was a very angry and heavy record – people wanted to be uplifted, so P.O.D. with their song *Alive* blew up because people needed those uplifting things."

Still, *Halo* had so much wind in its sails that even the tragedy of 9/11 couldn't completely derail things for Soil. The video, featuring the band playing a house party gig that saw them climbing the walls and bringing the house down, went into heavy MTV rotation.

"That video was so surreal!" Tim exclaims. "It was the first we'd ever filmed, and they spared no expense. They built this house in an airport hangar and all those stunts you see us do, they're for real, not camera tricks. I was literally walking up walls, hooked up to wires."

Within weeks of *Scars*' release, Soil were out on the road, playing to more ▶

Soil unleashed a club banger in *Halo*

"WE HAD A HIT SINGLE BEFORE WE EVEN PUT OUT THE RECORD"

TIM KING

than 10,000 people every night on the Merry Mayhem tour alongside Ozzy Osbourne, Rob Zombie and Mudvayne.

"That was the tour that sent us over the edge," Tim says. "Our bus used to park right next to Zakk Wylde's, and Zakk would invite us on to drink. He would go through two cases of beer and a bottle of Crown Royal [Canadian whisky] every night! We were just 20-something kids who'd get a buzz from three beers, so we'd end up crawling off the bus!"

More success awaited the band when they made it over to the UK. *Scars* was released in Britain in January 2002, five months after it came out back home. By that point, word had spread about Soil and the buzz was deafening.

"We flew over to do one show at the Camden Underworld and when we got there, there was this huge line going around the block waiting to get in," Tim says. "They had to stop letting people join, because there were hundreds of people who clearly couldn't get into this 500-capacity club! People in the UK understood what Soil were about right away."

When the band returned three months later to play with Skindred and Adema, every show was sold out.

"People were going crazy; *Halo* was an instant hit in the clubs," says Tim. "It's still in rotation today, I believe! The UK is basically our Graceland."

Not everyone was enjoying the ride, however. Frontman Ryan quit the band shortly after the release of their third album, 2004's *Redefine*, tired of having to deal with the music industry bullshit that came with being in a band. He took a year out before joining Drowning Pool for a six-year, three-album stint between 2005 and 2011. It would be *Halo*'s enduring success in the UK that eventually brought him back into the Soil fold.

"We'd been talking to Ryan and his time with Drowning Pool was coming to an end," recalls Tim. "So we said, 'It's the 10th anniversary of *Scars*… why don't you come back and we can tour the UK?' We sorted out some of our past issues, because he hadn't left on the best of terms, and we filmed [greatest hits live album CD/DVD] *Re-LIVE-Ing The Scars* in London [in October 2011]. It just all came back and we've never looked back."

SOIL'S LATEST ALBUM, *PLAY IT FORWARD*, IS OUT VIA CLEOPATRA

PRESS

ACADEMY EVENTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH KZ AGENCY PRESENTS

BIOHAZARD

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
RAGING SPEEDHORN

THURSDAY
17TH AUGUST 2023
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LONDON

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SPOTLIGHT ON LONDON

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
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PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
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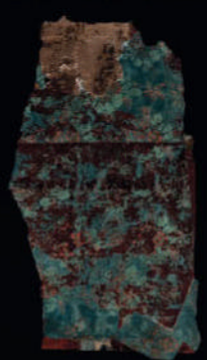

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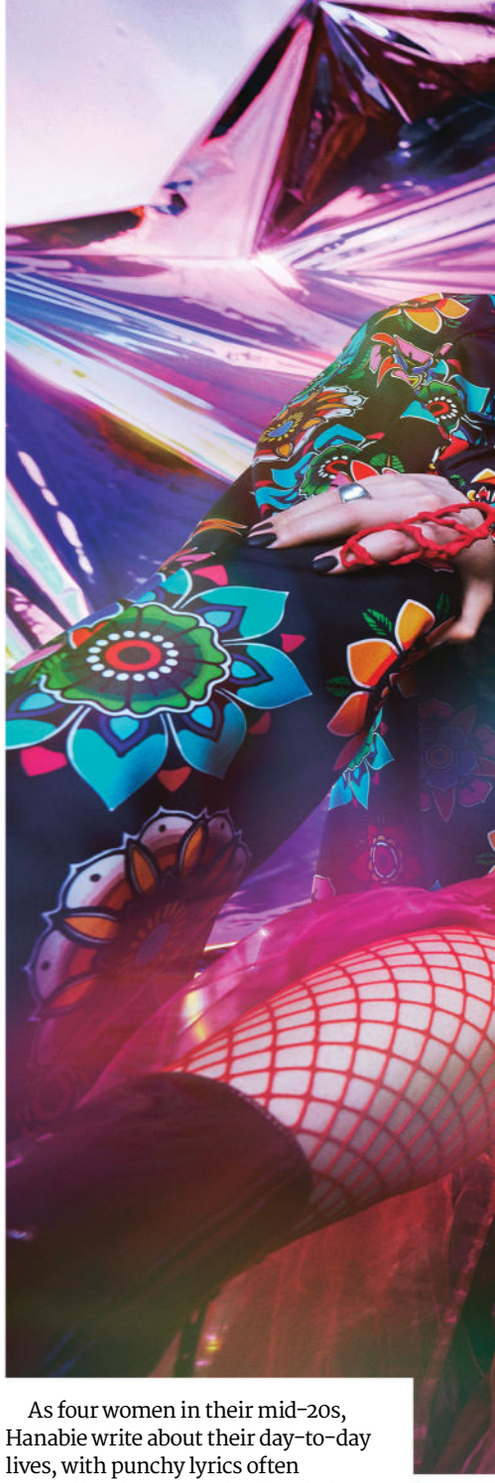
ATAMA

NEW NOISE

HANABIE

With high-energy songs about Gen-Z life, these four young women are Japan's latest viral metal sensations

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN



THERE'S A MOMENT in the video for Hanabie's *Osaki Ni Shitsurei Shimasu* (*Pardon Me, I Have To Go Now*), where singer Yukina grabs her boss by the neck and screams in his face. It's the culmination of a day in the office where she's carried out a string of tedious tasks, from tea-making to photocopying, all while being patronised, and is then expected to go for drinks in the evening. Funny and relatable, it's one of the reasons – along with the bouncy chorus and instrumentation from Japanese stringed instrument the shamisen – the song went viral in January.

"In Japan, whether you're working in a corporate atmosphere or even in the music industry, when you go out drinking with people, there's this phrase that you say: 'Osaki Ni Shitsurei Shimasu'. It means, 'Pardon me, I have to go now,'" explains guitarist Matsuri of the title. "It's a really convenient phrase you can use to excuse yourself without being rude, and it's very distinctive to Japanese culture. We wanted to talk about that phrase and that culture in a way that's witty."

When we meet Hanabie at an Italian bistro in Tokyo, they're giggling about beer. They've been given moderately sized glasses, while their male manager has been given a tankard – where's the fairness in that? We chat about Y2K fashion, cute Sanrio characters, ice cream. Unlike Japanese idol bands such as Babymetal, or stylised power metal bands like Lovebites, Hanabie project a Gen-Z image of relaxation, messiness and authenticity.

There's a clear bond between the girls, likely because Yukina, Matsuri and bassist Hettsu – alongside former drummer Kaede – met in junior high in Tokyo, before forming Hanabie during their first year of high school, in May 2015. Yukina was 16 years old, her bandmates 15. Their name reflects the fact Yukina was born in spring while the others were born in winter: 'Hana' means 'flower,' and 'bie' means 'cold'.

Hanabie's music is a high-energy fusion of metalcore and electronics – the soundtrack to a neon-splattered cyberpunk videogame. Above all, it's *fun*. Yukina – who instantly flips from singing and rapping to guttural screams – likes punk and metalcore, Matsuri's into hardcore, and Hettsu rates anime soundtracks. As Japan's biggest metal export, Westerners might be tempted draw comparisons to Babymetal – especially since Hanabie have a song called *We Love Sweets* – but their main influence is Tokyo metal quintet Maximum The Hormone, who hop between subgenres and are known for their tongue-in-cheek videos.

"I first heard Maximum The Hormone when I was in junior high, and it was the first time I'd heard such intense, heavy metal music," explains Yukina, who was aware of metal due to the manga series *K-On!*, which features a character in a death metal band, but didn't know much about it. "A senior at my school was in a Maximum The Hormone tribute band, which was really inspiring."

"I first heard them in junior high too, and my dad listened to them at home," adds Matsuri. "At first I thought it was scary, but more and more I started liking the sound. So then I started listening to the other CDs that my dad had, going to the nearby CD store, and diving into the entire genre."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE: Hyper metalcore with playful lyrics and Gen Z realness

FOR FANS OF: Maximum The Hormone, Enter Shikari, Crossfaith

LISTEN TO: *Osaki Ni Shitsurei Shimasu* (*Pardon Me, I Have To Go Now*)

As four women in their mid-20s, Hanabie write about their day-to-day lives, with punchy lyrics often concealing deeper truths. For their debut album, 2021's *Otome Kaikaku* (*Girl's Reform Manifest*), they penned a song called *Reiwa Dating Apps Generation* (Reiwa is the current era of Japan's official calendar, which began in 2019, when Emperor Naruhito ascended the throne). The video borders on the explicit and has a sinister conclusion.

"It's a Gen-Z song," confirms Yukina. "Now in this Reiwa era, people are meeting each other through matching apps, so it's a song that says, 'Wow, what a time we live in.' You're going to be meeting strangers, so the song is a shoutout of caution to people."

"The fun bit is that you're able to meet people who have similar hobbies to you, and people you wouldn't necessarily meet otherwise," adds Matsuri. "The challenging bit is that you hear stories from friends about

PRESS

Hanabie (left to right): Chika, Yukina, Hettsu, Matsuri

dangerous situations they faced because of that."

Now signed to Sony and with their line-up completed by new drummer Chika, you can expect more of the same from upcoming album *Reborn Superstar!*. Their music is even more hyper, Yukina's vocals even more brutal. In between the rock-club-ready riffs, *Warning!* highlights social media addiction while *Neet Game* celebrates videogaming at the same time as acknowledging its potential downsides.

"Since I really like games, I wanted to create a track that incorporates sounds from them," explains Matsuri. "And then we said, 'If it has game sounds in it, the lyrics should also be about games.' But it also carries this message about people who are at home all the time, because they're playing games. It encourages these people to come out of the house and see gigs in person."

As the three original members of Hanabie have known each other for 12 years, they consider each other family. Yukina sees Matsuri as their leader.

"I WAS INSPIRED BY A MAXIMUM THE HORMONE TRIBUTE BAND"

YUKINA

"She's serious and she's cool, but on the other hand she's sometimes a klutz and there's a cute side of her," Yukina smiles. "I would describe her as a 'super-interesting genius'."

Matsuri reciprocates those feelings. "A lot of times, people think of Yukina as this cute woman that has a soft kind of look and way about her, but on the inside she's actually cool and serious about what she does, and she also has talents that I don't have," says Matsuri. "So Yukina called me a genius, but I also consider *her* a genius."

With genius-level skills to call on, international shows on their touring schedule and an ultimate ambition to become a household name, it doesn't look like Hanabie will be forced to endure the tedium of office culture any time soon.

***REBORN SUPERSTAR!* IS OUT ON JULY 26 VIA SONY MUSIC LABELS / EPIC RECORDS JAPAN. HANABIE PLAY LONDON ON AUGUST 20**

NEW NOISE

LANA DEL RABIES

Arizona's industrial dissident finds forgiveness in the aftermath of fury

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER

SAM AN'S THIRD album as Lana Del Rabies nearly didn't see the light of day. Still reeling from the recording of the claustrophobic, industrial purgatory that was 2018's *Shadow World* record, she had considered dropping the project and starting afresh.

"I was in a chaotic, self-destructive, may-not-have-made-it-out-alive type of place when I wrote that record," she admits.

Working in child welfare in her native Arizona, seeing the effects of the Trump administration's child separation border policy up close and undergoing the collective trauma of Covid understandably gave way to a sense of exhaustion.

"When you're in this place of wanting to heal," says Sam, "reckoning with your own childhood shit, being face to face with this all-at-once-feeling, that's a lot of where the new record came from."

Strega Beata does sound exhausted – not in the sense of giving up so much as having gone beyond the anger and ordeal of *Shadow World*.

"Writing *Strega Beata* was cathartic, but a slow burn, whereas on *Shadow World* I just purged it all out," Sam says. "But that's what healing is, right? It's not like you go to therapy one time and you're good. You have to be in it for a while, and that's what this record was for me."

Taking the perspective of a deity looking down upon the foibles of her children, and the limits of the power they assume, its combination of looped pneumatic beats and rich, corrosive atmospheres is a means to step back, unburden and, ultimately, forgive.

"I almost feel like forgiveness is a tool for personal peace more than it is for making things right," she says. "Even if there's never going to be closure, can you forgive people who harmed you, or yourself? This was a way to take a step back and ask: why are we so destructive, can it be changed, and how can we reach acceptance?" H

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
A set of scriptures recovered from a long-gone industrial civilisation

FOR FANS OF:
Lingua Ignota, Godflesh, Jordan Reyne

LISTEN TO:
Forgive

***STREGA BEATA* IS OUT NOW VIA GILGONGO**

ASHENSPIRE

Anarchist black metallers imagine a boot stamping on a face forever

WORDS: ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

ASHENSPIRE'S SECOND FULL-LENGTH album, *Hostile Architecture*, crept online back in July 2022. Just before Christmas, it was reviewed by Anthony Fantano, the internet's busiest music nerd, who boasts some 2.6 million YouTube subscribers.

"We got 6,000 new listeners on that day alone," recalls Alasdair Dunn, the Glaswegian collective's key songwriter, drummer and vocalist. "We need to order more merch!"

It's a weird situation for a band who identify as 'red and anarchist black metal', sure. Pilfering from jazz/hip hop group BadBadNotGood as much as they do Altar Of Plagues, Ashenspire are the sound of hope dying… artfully. Alasdair's Nick Cave-choking-on-fibreglass screams, the sax, violin and hammered dulcimer, fighting against Rizla-thin guitars and blastbeats… it's bleak, repressive noise worthy of the record's title, pulling from philosopher Mark Fisher's take on modern life, *Capitalist Realism*.

"Some crustpunk and hip hop has that vibe," says Scott McLean, who played piano on *Hostile Architecture* as well as producing, recording and mixing the album. "Metal just has that energy you can use, but there's not that much protest music within metal."

He's not wrong. Listen to every washed-up nu metal C-leaguer pissing out 'rallying anti-establishment anthems™', and then Alasdair's declaration in *Cable Street Again*: *'I hope you like poverty, breathing in soot, and the taste of leather off Britain's boot.'*

"The idea is to make the unseen, seen," Alasdair explains, citing German philosopher Karl Marx as inspiration for his barbed prose. "There's something heavy metal about Marx, when he really gets into it. It's pure Manowar. 'Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!'" H

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Sickening, avant-garde black metal banging at your door and demanding you consider Marxism

FOR FANS OF:
Imperial Triumphant, Altar Of Plagues, A Forest Of Stars

LISTEN TO:
The Law Of Asbestos

***HOSTILE ARCHITECTURE* IS OUT NOW VIA CODE666. ASHENSPIRE WILL PLAY SUPERSONIC AND DAMNATION FESTIVALS, IN SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER RESPECTIVELY**

PRESS.

GRIEF SYMPOSIUM

East Anglian doom merchants take their cues from 90s legends

WORDS: DOM LAWSON • PICTURES: KLAUDIA MARIA PATER

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Esoteric death/doom, inspired by ancient gods

FOR FANS OF:
My Dying Bride, (early) Paradise Lost, Disembowelment

LISTEN TO:
Among Dead Gods

GRIM, BRUTAL AND avowedly esoteric, Grief Symposium are self-proclaimed descendants of the early UK death and doom metal scenes. The band's debut album, *...In The Absence Of Light*, is a deeply atmospheric affair with its roots in the early 90s.

"We grew up in underground metal at a time when creativity and exploration were key," says vocalist SJT. "The pace of evolution was rapid: Paradise Lost went from *Lost Paradise* to *Icon* – four incredible albums in four years. We wanted to recapture that boldness."

From full-on death metal to surreal, otherworldly ambience, the band's first full-length is full of surprises. Perhaps the biggest is that, despite its remorselessly morbid vibe, the lyrics to songs like *Veil Of Transformation* paint an unexpectedly positive picture.

"Fundamentally, *...Absence* is actually about hope, hope born from internal resolution and choice," explains SJT. "It's about having a will to reflect, to repent, and to seek a path to renewal no matter the darkness you are in."

The final track on the album speaks volumes about Grief Symposium's fearlessness. Eighteen minutes long and wonderfully odd, *The Amber Kiss Of The Sun* has a spoken-word cameo from one of their most exalted forebears.

"We were already in conversation with Aaron [Stainthorpe, My Dying Bride] and he agreed to work on some narration ideas," says SJT. "He wrote an extremely moving set of lyrics and also gave the song its title, so he really delivered for us. He's an absolute gentleman. Meet your heroes!"

***...IN THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT* IS OUT NOW VIA CHURCH ROAD**

WARKINGS

European history enthusiasts write heavy metal epics for the ages

WORDS: RICH HOBSON • PICTURES: MATTHIAS SCHWAIGHOFER

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Triumphant, joyous trad metal with the occasional melodeath twist

FOR FANS OF:
Powerwolf, Dream Evil, Sabaton

LISTEN TO:
Monsters

HEAVY METAL LOVES a bit of panto, but even in a world of Sabatons and Turisases, Warkings feel like an especially joyous blast of trad-flavoured power metal. Forged in the heart of Europe in 2018, the band's story revolves around a group of historical warriors (A Viking, Spartan, Crusader and Tribune) who met in the afterlife and decided to form a band to sing about their exploits. Daft, yes, but then that's rather the point.

"Heavy metal is meant to be larger than life," explains bassist The Viking. "We're not so serious – we're not Manowar. We won't die for heavy metal… we're already dead!"

With four albums under their belts and tours alongside Powerwolf and Feuerschwanz getting them out to the masses, they're accustomed to seeing huge crowds enthusiastically roaring along to their historically themed epics.

"The band hadn't even existed for a year when we were booked for Wacken – we played to 10,000 people," says The Viking. "We want to bring all visitors into our world and make them forget about the harsh realities outside, and give people a good time."

***MORGANA* IS OUT NOW VIA NAPALM. WARKINGS PLAY BLOODSTOCK IN AUGUST**

IN THE KNOW

What your favourite bands are listening to

CRYPTA

"CRYPTA BLOW MY mind. They're a cool combination of death metal and black metal, but still super-decipherable, where you can sing everything she [Fernanda Lira] sings. They're fantastic and I wish them the very best."

TOBIAS FORGE, GHOST

. GHOST: PRESS. CRYPTA: PRESS.

HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month

CLUTCH

SUNRISE ON SLAUGHTER BEACH - 7" VINYL BOX SET

WEATHERMAKER

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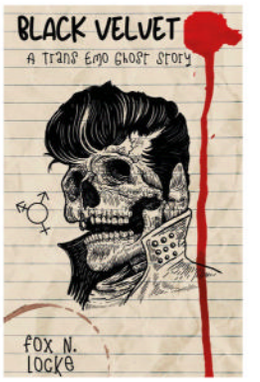
CLUTCH FANS APPRECIATE the benefits of going the extra distance. Over three decades and change, the Maryland four-piece have ranged far beyond the expectations of whatever subgenre they've been associated with, be it stoner or blues rock, to build a richly detailed, peerless world of their own. Clutch's 13th album, last year's *Sunrise On Slaughter Beach*, may have simmered with frustration with the state of the world, but it was steeped in the band's uniquely celebratory sense of adventurism. If it's an album you want to go back to over and over again, this is your opportunity to physically do so, as it's been released as a limited-edition, six-disc 7" vinyl box set. Inside you'll also find three outtake tracks, a 7" slipmat and an eight-page booklet, all guaranteed to improve heart, soul and daily step count.

tinyurl.com/clutch-box



BLACK VELVET NOVEL

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The second spooky tome from Fox N. Locke conjures the ghost of Elvis against a backdrop of MySpace emo. Dubbed a 'trans emo ghost story', *Black Velvet* promises chills and nostalgia, but also a timely coming-of-age tale.

tinyurl.com/velvet-novel

CRYSTAL SCRYING MIRROR

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We've all seen enough horror movies to know gazing into an obsidian mirror isn't the smartest idea. You want to try? FINE. Just don't come crying to us when vengeful spirits possess your corporeal meatsack.

tinyurl.com/crystal-mirror

FOLK HORROR BEDSHEET

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tinyurl.com/folk-sheet-up

SLIPKNOT LIVE AT MSG BUNDLE

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Available in variously clear and splattered colours and configurations, this double vinyl version of *All Hope Is Gone*'s bonus live album lets you get your mad Sid skillz on. Slipknot + professional grade slipmat = shit hot.

tinyurl.com/born-slippy

EUGENE ROBINSON MEMOIR

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Beyond his time goading audiences with wonderfully atypical acts like Oxbow and Whipping Boy, Eugene Robinson has lived multiple bizarre lives: writer, fighter and intellectual. Immerse yourself in the chaos.

tinyurl.com/eugene-book

VADER ECHO DOT HOLDER

£38.40

Ever wanted a Sith Lord of your own to command? Now you can, even if it only answers to "Alexa". Ask it to play Galactic Empire, though, and you might find yourself choking in mid-air.

tinyurl.com/vader-speaks

HEILUNG POTTERY SET

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These handcrafted artefacts come emblazoned with Heilung's signature Warrior Snail. Perfect for adding a sense of ritual to your tea and toast, or schooling little ones in the ways of folk metal as part of a teddy bears' picnic.

tinyurl.com/heilung-pots

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Fred Durst at Woodstock 1999, just before all hell broke loose

THE GREAT NU METAL TAKEOVER

From the rise of Evanescence and Dimebag Darrell's last hurrah to *Guitar Hero* and *Jackass*, the 2000s was the decade where everything happened. And it began with Limp Bizkit, Linkin Park, Papa Roach and nu metal's blockbuster era

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS

GETTY

Fred Durst is standing with his hand on the detonator, counting down to oblivion. It's May 1999, and MTV have invited Limp Bizkit to the Bahamas for *Blow The Boat: Isle Of MTV Summer Launch*, a televised summer moshfest with two express goals: firstly, to showcase two new tracks – *I'm Broke* and *Nookie* – from the band's soon-to-be-released second album, *Significant Other*, and secondly, to… well, blow up a boat.

Looking back now, the correlation between the two is anyone's guess, but as Fred pushes down the plunger that detonates the explosives packed into the small sailboat moored a few hundred yards away, sending stern and bow rocketing sky-high in an inferno of flames, the symbolism is hard to miss. Over the previous few years, nu metal had become the dominant sound within the metal scene thanks to the likes of Korn, Deftones and Coal Chamber and Limp Bizkit themselves, but, like the boat that Fred Durst has just blown up, it's about to explode everywhere.

Until that point, nu metal had largely been kept at arm's length by the gatekeepers of mainstream culture. But suddenly this downtuned, groove-heavy, hip hop-influenced mutant noise had become too big to ignore.

Between the year 2000 and the end of 2003, the whole world went nu metal. The likes of Limp Bizkit, System Of A Down, Papa Roach, Disturbed and Linkin Park produced million-selling album after million-selling album. Their music muscled its way into the upper regions of the chart, onto TV shows and into movies, and into the worlds of video games, wrestling and extreme sports. Nu metal engendered its own community and look: kids in baggy jeans and studded wristbands gathered in parks, town centres, shopping malls and clubs up and down the country. Nu metal went from outsider scene to being at the centre of everything. As Serena Cherry, singer and guitarist with Brit-metal ragers Svalbard and a former teenage nu metal fan, puts it today: "It was so much more than a genre."

Korn are rightly credited with pioneering nu metal with the release of their self-titled debut album in 1994. That record, whose tar-thick grooves drew on hip hop as an inspiration and whose emotional angst owed as much of a debt to grunge as it did to metal, sparked an avalanche.

Nu metal's first wave broadened metal's boundaries. Limp Bizkit's debut album, 1997's *Three Dollar Bill, Y'All*, had fused the swagger of Cypress Hill and the Wu-Tang Clan with the energy of 80s punk bands such as Black Flag and Minor Threat, throwing in a trend-setting cover of George Michael's 1987 hit *Faith* for good measure (covering 80s pop songs was a very nu metal thing to do, reaching critical mass in 2001 with Alien Ant Farm's cranked-up version of the old Michael Jackson hit *Smooth Criminal*).

"People were either high on the emotion of things being fresh and exciting in terms of new sounds and urban music coming into heavy music, or they were rebelling against that," Fred Durst told *Metal Hammer* in 2014. "It meant something to a big group of people who had never been heard before. It was special."

By 2000, that "big group of people" had become enormous. That was the year when nu metal went truly crazy. The list of albums released between January and December 2000 that went on to reach gold and platinum status in the US (500,000 and 1 million 'units' shipped, respectively) is impressive. Among them were Disturbed's debut *The Sickness*, Deftones' *White Pony*, Mudvayne's *L.D. 50*, Papa Roach's *Infest*, Limp Bizkit's *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water* (launched with a party at the Playboy Mansion, no less) and, dwarfing them all, Linkin Park's 12-million-selling *Hybrid Theory*.

A very young Serena Cherry with Corey at a Slipknot signing circa 2001

"NU METAL IS A BEAUTIFUL SCAR ON THE METAL WORLD"

SERENA CHERRY

"A lot of people our age were into nu metal and forming bands," says Morgan Lander of Kittie, whose debut album, *Spit*, was released in November 1999. "Our first tour was with Slipknot, in January 2000. We were like, 'Holy shit, what is going on here?' People were eating it up."

Proof that nu metal had elbowed its way onto the mainstream's radar came on March 3, 2000, when Slipknot – riding high on the success of the previous year's self-titled debut album – made their debut UK TV appearance on *TFI Friday*. This boozily chaotic programme usually featured appearances from a mix of celebrities, actors and whichever A-list pop or indie band was in town that day.

But that night, the people watching at home didn't realise that chaos was about to rain down on them. Bafflingly if enthusiastically introduced by host Chris Evans as "horror metal landslide legends", the 'Knot tore into *Wait And Bleed* in front of an audience that was absolutely mad for it. Within the first minute, one camera was taken out. Seconds later, another camera cut to black, lost to the mist of violence. It was a performance that captivated the minds of young metal fans and would-be Maggots across the country.

One of those enraptured kids was Serena Cherry. Now the frontwoman of Svalbard, she vividly remembers watching Slipknot's *TFI* performance when it was broadcast, scrambling to get a tape in the VCR to record it and then watching it back over and over again.

"That moment was like bottled lightning. We would never be able to recreate it nowadays," she says, adding that she

SERENA CHERRY

Korn, pictured here circa 2000, pioneered the nu metal movement. Remember the first time you heard *Blind*? Spinechilling!

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

was inspired by Slipknot's Joey Jordison to learn drums. "I might not even be a musician had it not been for nu metal."

The last time heavy music had been so dominant was almost a decade earlier, when grunge had become the defining soundtrack of the early 1990s. But where the likes of Nirvana and Pearl Jam viewed fame with a mix of embarrassment and contempt, nu metal took the opposite stance, taking its in-your-face swagger and appetite for excess from hip hop's larger-than-life approach.

"They had this rock star attitude," says Bury Tomorrow vocalist Dani Winter-Bates, who was 14 when Limp Bizkit released *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water*. "This punk attitude without it being punk."

Money was thrown at big-budget promo videos for songs such as Limp's Bizkit's *Rollin'*, which was filmed on top of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and featured a cameo from actor Ben Stiller, and Papa Roach's *Last Resort*, whose video perfectly captured the exhilaration of nu metal. Nu metal found itself in heavy rotation on all-powerful MTV show *TRL* ('Total Request Live'). alongside the likes of Backstreet Boys and Destiny's Child.

Suddenly, everybody wanted a piece of nu metal. Korn and Limp Bizkit had collaborated with rappers Ice Cube and Eminem respectively in the late 90s (the latter on unreleased *Significant Other* track *Turn Me Loose*), but now the two genres were becoming properly entangled. *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water* featured guest spots from rappers DMX, Redman, Method Man, Xzibit and Run DMC's Run. Two days after the album was released, Limp Bizkit and Eminem teamed up for the Anger Management Tour, which also featured Papa Roach, Xzibit, DMX and Godsmack.

Nu metal's early 2000s blockbuster phase was the era of the mega package tour. As well as Anger Management, there was 2000's Tattoo The Earth (27 dates co-headlined by Slipknot and Slayer), the latest instalment of the Korn-created Family Values tour (the 2001 line-up featured Linkin Park, Staind, Static-X and Deadsy alongside headliners Stone Temple Pilots), 2001's Pledge Of Allegiance tour (Slipknot and System of A Down co-headlining, with support from Rammstein, Mudvayne, American Head Charge and the long-forgotten No One) and the Sno-Core tour (headlined in 2000, 2001 and 2002 by System Of A Down, Fear Factory and Alien Ant Farm respectively). Looming over them all was Ozzfest, the big daddy of the travelling metal festival scene, which adroitly surfed the nu metal zeitgeist.

"Ozzfest was sort of like our summer camp," says Kittie's Morgan Lander, who played on the 2000 edition of the tour. "The energy was very raw back then for a lot of that stuff. The crowds were pretty out of control."

With the scene's success came acceptance in other areas previously shut off for metal bands. At 2000's MTV VMA awards, Fred Durst – by now the unofficial CEO of nu metal – joined pop superstar Christina Aguilera for an unlikely version of Limp Bizkit's *Livin' It Up*. Tabloid rumours swirled that Fred was dating both Christina (her team were said to have talked her out of the union, fearing the damage it would cause to her reputation) and fellow singer Britney Spears.

Surfing the wave of nu metal: Papa Roach during MTV New Year's Eve Bash 2001 in Times Square, New York City

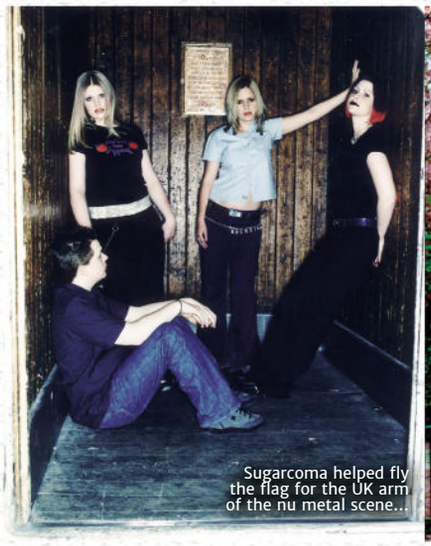
Speaking to *Metal Hammer* last year, Papa Roach's Jacoby Shaddix recalled how dizzying and delirious it was being caught up in the midst of it all.

"We played Rock In Rio [in 2001], and I was in the pool drinking with Queens Of The Stone Age and Foo Fighters," he said. "Axl Rose was over there having lunch. Britney Spears was in the pool." And so he found himself doing what any 25-year-old who suddenly found himself rubbing shoulders with a bunch of A-list stars would do. "I was like, 'All the famous people are in the pool, I gotta pee in the pool!'"

As the early 2000s progressed, nu metal's popularity snowballed, assisted in no small part by the rise of file-sharing services Napster and LimeWire. Suddenly kids across the world could illegally download anything from Disturbed's *The Sickness* to Korn's big-budget *Untouchables* at the click of a mouse and the high-pitched *scrreeee* of an old-school dial-up modem. Smaller bands found themselves dragged along in their wake. B-listers such as Fear Factory protégés Spineshank, The Union Underground (big hit: *Turn Me On "Mr. Deadman"*) and Adema (featuring Jonathan Davis's half-brother, Mark Chavez) got their five minutes on MTV and the dancefloor of the local rock club.

Other sectors of the entertainment industry wanted a piece of the action. Hollywood began packing out the soundtracks to everything with nu metal bands. The gaming world was an even more natural fit, with nu metal songs appearing on everything from *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* series to *Madden NFL 2003*. And then there was wrestling. In 2001, at the height of WWE's Attitude Era, Limp Bizkit's *My Way* became the theme for WrestleMania X-Seven.

"The angst and drama of wrestling and nu metal merged perfectly in the early 2000s," says Serena Cherry, a fan of both gaming and wrestling. "[Masked wrestler] Kane could have been in Slipknot and the Hardy Boyz represented looking a bit different, looking a bit weird. Nu metal stood for exactly the same thing, to fight for your individuality and not be afraid to show your anger or express darker emotions.



Sugarcoma helped fly the flag for the UK arm of the nu metal scene...

...as did Defenestration, whose support credits included Megdeth and Slayer

"WE WENT, 'HOLY SHIT, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?'"
MORGAN LANDER

GETTY, PRESS, GETTY/MICK HUTSON

RAGE AGAINST THE SCREEN

Ten early-00s movies with banging nu metal soundtracks

Dracula 2000 (2000)
This hokey modern update of the vampire icon was salvaged by a soundtrack that featured Disturbed, Linkin Park, Static-X, (hed) PE plus System Of A Down's killer cover of *The Metro* by 80s new wavers Berlin.

Little Nicky (2000)
Adam Sandler's comedy about the geeky son of the Devil got a soundtrack that read like a who's who of nu metal: Linkin Park, P.O.D., Disturbed, Deftones and Incubus. Sandler even jammed with the latter two bands on *Saturday Night Live* on the back of it.

Heavy Metal 2000 (2000)
The belated follow-up to cult 1981 classic *Heavy Metal* wasn't a great film, but it was livened up by a soundtrack featuring Coal Chamber, forgotten Puerto Rican nu metallers Puya and System Of A Down (again), the latter turning in rare track *Störagéd*.

Mission: Impossible 2 (2000)
Metallica's one-off single *I Disappear* was the headline news on the Tom Cruise action sequel, but Limp Bizkit weren't far behind with *Take A Look Around*, which featured Freddy D rapping over Lalo Schifrin's iconic original *M:I* theme.

Scream 3 (2000)
The *Scream* franchise was looking decidedly creaky by its third instalment. The good news was that it had a, ahem, killer nu metal soundtrack featuring Slipknot, Incubus, Orgy, Coal Chamber and – oh yes – System Of A Down.

The Scorpion King (2002)
A justly derided spin-off of *The Mummy*, *The Scorpion King* was notable for a) starring a pre-superstardom The Rock, and b) having Drowing Pool, P.O.D., Mushroomhead and - yep – System Of A Bloody Down on the soundtrack.

Queen Of The Damned (2002)
This loose adaptation of an Anne Rice novel was a be-fanged turkey, but the soundtrack featured an array of nu metal icons from Chester Bennington to David Draiman singing songs written and performed by Jonathan Davis in the actual movie.

Rollerball (2002)
A lesson in why dystopian 70s sports satires should never be remade, the box office bomb that was *Rollerball* was made mildly less painful by music from Slipknot, Fear Factory, P.O.D. and Drowning Pool. No System Of A Down, though. Boo!

Daredevil (2003)
Years before Ben Affleck was a rubbish Batman, he was a rubbish Daredevil. Thankfully, the soundtrack featured the Drowning Pool/Rob Zombie collab *The Man Without Fear* and, more importantly, helped fire Evanescence's *Bring Me To Life* to prominence.

Freddy vs. Jason (2003)
The ultimate monster mash was a massive letdown, but the soundtrack proved to be nu metal's last cinematic hurrah, with the likes of Slipknot and Ill Niño handing over the baton to rising NWOAHM stars such as Killswitch Engage and Chimaira.

Kittie had their work cut out when it came to battling the misogyny of the nu metal scene

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

While nu metal's epicentre was undoubtedly the US, a fertile albeit much smaller scene was happening in the UK, populated by bands such as Miocene, Sugarcoma and Defenestration. The latter garnered attention for their 2001 debut album, *One Inch God*.

"I remember going to the [UK] Ozzfest as a fan in 2001 and I got absolutely mobbed," says Defenestration vocalist Gen Tasker today, recalling the moment she realised how big a deal nu metal had become. "I did not know how to deal with it. I was like, how do these people all know who I am? I remember going home that day absolutely exhausted and crying because I felt like I was like Britney Spears or something, but without the security."

Being a British nu metal band could be a thankless task. While US bands were raking in the dollars and clearing wall space for their platinum discs, their UK counterparts never reached the same level of commercial or financial success.

"I still lived with my parents and had to go to work in some horrible dingy factories," says Gen. "I remember packing vegetables on the day that our second album was released."

Like virtually every subculture before them, nu metal displayed its tribal affiliations via the clothes it wore and the way it looked. Yet even the fashion was different to that which had come before in the 80s and 90s metal scenes: puddle-scraping trousers and wallet chains mismatched with sportswear was the uniform of kids hanging out in town centres and shopping malls.

"Nu metal hyped up brands that weren't necessarily associated with the alternative scene," says Bury Tomorrow's Dani Winter-Bates. "You'd have the shell Adidas shoes with big, flared jeans, all these bands up your arm and spikes around your neck, but then you'd have a hip hop jacket."

"Fashion was such a big part of it because nu metal was about communicating to everyone else," adds Serena Cherry. "It wasn't just about an internal rebellion. It was about showing that externally, through what you wore and how you acted. Everything about it was there to tell the world that you were pissed off."

So distinct was the nu metal 'look' that Calvin Klein asked Kittie if they wanted to appear in one of their iconic black and white jeans adverts. It was an offer the band refused for fear of betraying their authenticity. "At the time we were [all about] remaining legit," says Morgan Lander. "We didn't want anyone to question the validity of our songwriting skills or our abilities as musicians."

Their worries were justified. Kittie found themselves on the receiving end of the misogyny that dogged the nu metal scene, internally and externally. The band were vacuously described as "Britney Spears meets Slayer" on one US chat show, while male fans would peer behind their amps at gigs, assuming a guitar tech was playing their riffs for them.

"There was a lot of rumour and online speculation about whether we wrote our songs or that we were some sort of industry plant," says Morgan. "Perhaps we were children of privilege, and my dad bought our record contract."

The misogyny and frat-boy boorishness that surrounded nu metal is indefensible. Ironically, it was Fred Durst – whose band's set at the ill-fated Woodstock 1999 festival was marred by aggression and alleged sexual assaults in the crowd – who later criticised the growing toxicity that surrounded the scene.

"I really thought that people were identifying where I was coming from – a guy who finally got to stand up and fight back," he told *Metal Hammer* in 2012. "The irony was that the bullies themselves started to like the music."

For Svalbard's Serena Cherry, who was bullied throughout secondary school, being a teenage nu metal fan wasn't easy. "I remember walking through town and having milkshake thrown on me," she says now. "There was a group of girls who used to wait for me after school to beat me up – they used to call me a dirty mosher and a goth."

Back then, tribal lines were not to be crossed. "I remember it always used to be like, 'Oh, there's going to be a fight after school between the 'trendies' and the 'moshers'," she says. "But it always seemed to me like the trendies picking on the moshers. It never seemed the other way around."

Once nu metal hit the mainstream, one of her chief antagonists arrived at school with freshly dyed black hair, wearing a band t-shirt. "I remember being so offended by that," says Serena. "You made my life misery a year ago for liking this stuff, and now you're turning around telling me it's cool, trying to say that you're the same as me?"

Despite nu metal's success, sections of the mainstream music press had always treated the genre with varying degrees of condescension and barely disguised contempt. Yet it would be nu metal itself that proved to be the architect of its own downfall.

By the end of 2003, the scene was becoming stagnant. While Linkin Park proved that lightning could strike twice with their second album, *Meteora*, many of the bands who broke in the 1990s had wilfully disentangled themselves from it, among them Deftones, System Of A Down and Slipknot (as brilliant as they are, *White Pony*, *Toxicity* and *Vol 3: (The Subliminal Verses)* aren't nu metal albums). The bands that were coming through lacked the spark of their predecessors; those that did have it, such as the goth-tinged Evanescence, were combining nu metal with something fresh. Limp Bizkit served up a turkey with their fourth

"WE CREATED A SOUND THAT WAS NEW AND UNIQUE"

JACOBY SHADDIX

DUETS! RIOTS! ADAM SANDLER!

How nu metal gatecrashed our TVs in the early 2000s

Slipknot play *TFI Friday* (2000)
The gold standard of 2000s nu metal TV: Slipknot lay waste to early evening show *TFI Friday*. There's laughter as host Chris Evans announces they'll be playing a song called *Wait And Bleed*. By the time they finish, no one is laughing.

Adam Sandler jams with Deftones and Incubus (2000)
Former *Saturday Night Live* star Adam Sandler returned to the show to promote his new film, *Little Nicky*. Cue an unexpectedly excellent acoustic cover of Deftones' *Be Quiet And Drive (Far Away)* with Chino Moreno and Incubus's Brandon Boyd.

P.O.D. do *MTV Cribs* (2000)
MTV Cribs was the must-appear-on show of the early 2000s, taking the viewer inside musicians' houses. Cue P.O.D. drummer Wuv Bernardo attempting to look cool while showing off a Buzz Lightyear VHS. Bonus fact: a pre-megafame Beyoncé was on the same episode with her group Destiny's Child.

Fred Durst duets with Christina Aguilera (2000)
MTV's VMA Awards frequently threw up some brilliant and/or baffling collaborations. Never more so than the sight of Fred Durst rising from his chair to rap the chorus of the Bizkit's *Livin' It Up* midway through Christina Aguilera's performance of *Come On Over (All I Want Is You)*. Rumours of a secret romance between the two stars only added to the frisson.

Linkin Park rip it up on *Conan O'Brien* (2001)
Conan O'Brien was a champion of heavy music on his late night talk show, with everyone from Slipknot to At The Drive-In making an appearance. Linkin Park's exhilarating performance of *One Step Closer* was a highlight. '*Shut up when I'm talking to you*', snarled the never-more-savage Chester Bennington.

Papa Roach perform on *Top Of The Pops* (2001)
Much-missed music show *Top Of The Pops* had no choice but to feature nu metal bands on the frequent occasions they graced the UK charts. Papa Roach turned in a characteristically energetic version of their Top 10 hit *Last Resort*.

System Of A Down make the evening news (2001)
On September 3, 2001, System Of A Down were due play a free show in a Hollywood parking lot to celebrate the release of their second album, *Toxicity*, the next day. Except thousands of fans turned up, the gig was cancelled and a riot ensued, landing the band on the US TV news.

Britney Spears serenades Incubus (2002)
The worlds of pop and nu metal collided again when Incubus dropped by the studio of MTV's *TRL* show. When Brandon Boyd joked to host Carson Daly that it was his birthday, fellow guest Britney Spears led the whole audience in a chorus of *Happy Birthday To You*. Aw, sweet.

Nu metal bows down before Metallica (2003)
A cross-generational passing of the torch, as nu metal's finest – and rapper Snoop Dogg – gathered to pay tribute to Metallica on this MTV special. Korn delivered a superb *One* while Limp Bizkit's cover of *Welcome Home (Sanitarium)* was surprisingly great.

Evanescence vs 50 Cent at the Grammys (2004)
Years before Kanye West gatecrashed Taylor Swift's Grammy acceptance speech, 50 Cent did the same with Evanescence after they beat the rapper to the Best New Artist award. Fiddy protested by marching on and off the stage, to which Amy Lee coolly replied, "Thanks, 50."

Linkin Park collecting an MTV Award in Madrid, Spain on November 7, 2010

Korn fans losing their shit at Fields Of Rock festival in the Netherlands, 2007

album, *Results May Vary*, and off the starboard bow, the sharks were starting to circle in the shape of the New Wave Of American Heavy Metal.

Yet whether they liked it or not, the bands that emerged during nu metal's early 2000s blockbuster phase had an impact on a generation of musicians that followed. Architects' Sam Carter, Bring Me The Horizon's Oli Sykes and Bury Tomorrow's Dani Winter-Bates have all talked about how nu metal provided the impetus for them to start their own journeys in music.

"Jacoby Shaddix is one of the main reasons why I'm a frontman today," says Dani. "He had a profound effect on my lyric writing, and on my hook writing. Even though your vocals are heavy, make it catchy so people remember it."

Yet nu metal itself has proved surprisingly durable. We're currently in the grip of resurgence, with everyone from Spiritbox and Bury Tomorrow to Blind Channel and Slipknot sprogs Vended incorporating elements of the genre into their sound. The renaissance was rubber-stamped at the Sick New World festival in Las Vegas earlier this year.

"I love the emotion of nu metal, specifically with Linkin Park," says Will Ramos, vocalist with rising deathcore heroes Lorna Shore. "That's a big reason why the last three songs on [the band's 2022 album] *Pain Remains* are as emotional as they are. I love songs that talk to you. It's not about the breakdowns. It's about the message."

And the old guard? The likes of Korn, Limp Bizkit and Papa Roach all expressed annoyance in the past at being saddled with the 'nu metal' tag. Today, they've all reconciled with the idea of being part of a scene that went supernova in the 00s.

"I look back on nu metal fondly now," Jacoby Shaddix told *Metal Hammer* in 2022. "Back in the day I was like, 'Fuck nu metal, that shit is dead.' Now I'm like, 'Fuck yeah! I was one of the OGs!' We were creating something, a sound that was new and unique and that's fucking dope. I am so grateful to be part of that story."

For Serena Cherry, nu metal's importance is about more than just the music and its cultural impact in the early 2000s. It's more personal than that.

"It was like the equivalent of a safe space through music," she says. "In terms of the way I dressed and getting in touch with emotions, nu metal was really good at teaching me how to deal with negative emotions and how to have an outlet for angst and rage and aggression. It made me who I am. It's a beautiful scar on the metal world."

GETTY

Reinventing

Bruised from the implosion of Pantera, Dimebag Darrell and Vinnie Paul dusted themselves down and launched Damageplan – one of the great lost bands of the 2000s

WORDS: JON WIEDERHORN

The Steel

GETTY

Pantera were in Dublin when the unthinkable happened. Twenty-four hours earlier, on September 10, 2001, they'd met in New York to fly to Ireland in preparation for the final leg of the tour in support of their ninth album, *Reinventing The Steel*, which had been released the previous year. But as they touched down in the Irish capital around noon on September 11, something felt wrong.

"I got off the plane and I had never felt such a cold vibe in my life," drummer Vinnie Paul told me in early 2004, looking back on the events of that infamous day. "I went to my hotel, got checked in, and my tour manager called and said, 'Are you watching TV?' I said, 'No, why – do they have the [Dallas] Cowboys game on?' He said, 'Turn it on!'"

Vinnie clicked the set on in his room, just as an airplane smashed into one of the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center and burst into a blinding fireball.

"Whoa, dude!" Vinnie told him, feeling his stomach drop. "What fucking movie is this?"

"This ain't no movie, bro," the manager replied, confirming Vinnie worst fears. "This is happening. And the tour's cancelled."

It soon became clear what was going on. What Vinnie had seen was the second of two planes that al-Qaida terrorists had flown into the World Trade Center. Soon, both towers would collapse, causing catastrophic loss of life.

With flights grounded, the four members of Pantera – Vinnie, his guitarist brother Dimebag Darrell, singer Phil Anselmo and bassist Rex Brown – were left stranded in their Dublin hotel for the next two weeks, feeling shellshocked and numb. Hours turned into days, and they hardly noticed. Vinnie and Dimebag Darrell hit the bar plenty, but not to party – to numb themselves even more. It seemed like the end of the world. It wasn't, not quite. But it ushered in the beginning of the end of Pantera – and the start of a new chapter for Dimebag and Vinnie.

The events of September 11 didn't directly lead to Pantera's split, but they exacerbated the pre-existing tensions that surfaced partially from spending 12 years together with hardly a break between albums, and partially because of singer Phil Anselmo's growing dependency on pills and heroin that he later said was his attempt to deal with an ongoing back injury resulting from the physicality of his performance.

"During those two weeks in Dublin, I didn't talk to Phil once," Vinnie told me in 2004, during a promotional campaign for Damageplan. "He turned into a recluse and stayed in his room. Finally we went home and two weeks later, he called me up and said, 'I got all these side bands I want to put out. If you don't want to help me get them out, I quit the band."

Rex Brown was also in pretty bad shape due to the accumulated effects of excessive drinking, but neither Vinnie nor Dime was ready to pull the plug on Pantera. To them, that was a last resort. The brothers scheduled a call with their bandmates and everyone agreed to take a six-to-12 month break before making plans to return to the studio for the follow-up to *Reinventing The Steel*.

During the planned hiatus, Phil appeared on records with Superjoint Ritual, Necrophagia and Viking Crown, and worked on other underground projects that didn't surface. According to Vinnie and Dimebag, Pantera's management repeatedly contacted the vocalist and tried to schedule meetings between him and the rest of the band, but he blew them off.

"About a year of this goes on, and me and Dime look at each other and go, 'Dude, this is fucked,'" Vinnie told me in 2004. "After reading what he and Rex had to say about Pantera [in the press] and hearing them dissing us in interviews, we went, 'You know what? I think this might be the end of this. We better start doing something because the only thing we know how to do is play music.'"

Pantera in 2001 (left to right): Dimebag Darrell, Rex Brown, Phil Anselmo, Vinnie Paul

"DIMEBAG WAS STILL UPSET ABOUT PANTERA"

ZAKK WYLDE

The inactivity was equally unsettling for Dime, who suddenly found himself questioning everything he had achieved as a member of Pantera. As a shredder immersed in a constantly morphing metal scene, he even pondered his continued relevance as a player, and wondered whether audiences were still interested in what he had to offer.

"I thought a lot about that stuff, and then I realised that you can do more damage to yourself thinking like that than you can with anything else that can fuck you up," Dime told me in 2004. "I mean, dude, I was cookin' along just fine, and then everything started to unfold with Phil, and it was like, 'Holy shit, what's going on here?' But that's just life. It's constantly testing you, and it hit me one day that this was like a test to see if I've got the balls and strength to overcome all these things that were coming at me."

Once the Abbott brothers realised they couldn't just sit around waiting for Pantera to reform, they launched full tilt into the project that would become Damageplan.

"With the last couple of Pantera records we kept getting more and more narrow-minded, not due to our preference in music, but because of Phil," the drummer said in 2004. "He was always like, 'No, we can't do that. We have to stick to our sound.' So, with the new band, we said, 'Well hey, let's put everything we ever played in the past in there and then some. Let's check out these new bands that are out now and get inspired again and move forward."

Dime started writing riffs for Damageplan in 2003, though at first it wasn't easy. He would talk on the phone with his friend and Black Label Society guitarist Zakk Wylde on

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Damageplan gave Dimebag his zest for life back

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a nightly basis, drink in hand. But instead of cracking one another up with wise-ass comments the way they had always done in the past, Zakk found himself sitting quietly and playing armchair therapist.

"That was the only time I ever talked to him when he wasn't a force of positivity," Zakk says now. "Clearly, he was still upset about Pantera. They had worked so hard to get to where they did and then it all ended, and he basically had to start over again. He was like, 'Zakk, what am I gonna do?'"

To help boost Dime's spirits, Zakk sent his friend a famous shot of late Ozzy Osbourne guitarist Randy Rhoads practising guitar in front of a mirror. "I said to Dime, 'Whenever you're feeling down, just look at this picture for inspiration'."

The pep talks with Zakk were helpful for Dimebag. So was reflecting on the early days of his playing career. He realised he didn't have to intentionally not write like Pantera. Instead, he approached the music with the kind of open mind he had before his band became famous.

"We started out as kids wanting to sound like Van Halen and Judas Priest," he recalled. "We just did what we loved, and we loved what we did. And in the early days, we did stuff that had great melodies like *Cemetery Gates* and catchy riffs like *Cowboys From Hell*. That helped me to branch back out and helped me just be myself."

Another factor that helped guide Dime's songwriting was the addition of vocalist Pat Lachman. The Abbott brothers knew Pat from when he played as a guitarist in Judas Priest frontman Rob Halford's solo band between 2000 and 2002. Though he was a natural fit for Damageplan, Dime was a little confused when Pat first told him he'd love to be involved in their new project.

"I said, 'Uh, you know, I got all the guitars handled?'" Dimebag said. "And Pat said, 'No, man, I can sing, too. Let me take a shot at it.' So, we gave him a demo of [Damageplan song] *Crawl* without vocals, and three days later he FedExed it back to us, and it totally kicked fucking ass. So we gave him a couple more tracks, he nailed them, and it was on!"

With a vocalist locked down, and bassist Robert 'Bob Zilla' Kakaha also on board, Dimebag quickly finished the batch of eclectic tunes. Without seeking a record deal, Damageplan set up at the guitarist's home studio in Dallas and started recording with Sterling Winfield, who had co-produced *Reinventing The Steel*.

Once Damageplan cranked the amps and started recording their new riffs, Dime's mood dramatically improved. Starting in the summer of 2003, he returned to the sorts of pranks and antics he had displayed on a nightly basis in Pantera.

"I had to replace six doors and eight feet of Sheetrock [plasterboard] in the bathroom because we were partying nonstop and raising fucking hell," he recalled in 2004. "Plenty of my guitars went down in flames. We smashed 'em and taped fireworks to 'em and lit them up."

Towards the end of the recording process, Damageplan hooked up with a couple of guest performers, neither of whom were planned in advance. When Zakk Wylde flew to Texas for a guitar magazine photoshoot, Dime took him to the studio to hear some of the rough mixes. A minute into the lunging, harmony-laden *Reborn*, Zakk stopped banging his head and blurted, "Yo, bro, I wanna play lead on this motherfucker right there."

"He had 10 minutes before he had to leave for the airport, so he goes and gets his guitar out of the car and comes back and starts fucking shredding," recalled Vinnie.

With barely enough time to pack everything up and catch his flight, Zakk did a couple of shots with the guys as Sterling cued up the delicate, acoustic *Soul Bleed*. Zakk slammed his glass on the table and jumped to his feet.

In his element: Dimebag onstage with Damageplan during the MTV Headbangers Ball Tour, April 1, 2004

"He was all, 'Holy shit, I gotta go and sing backup on that real quick! Turn the microphone on!' He wound up missing his plane over the deal."

The other guest, Corey Taylor, wound up on the album at the last possible minute. Stone Sour were playing Dallas and Dime hopped on the band's bus to play Corey the record. When he heard it, he begged to be included. So, Dime sent him a recording of the tumbling, hardcore-paced *Fuck You*

"WE JUST DID WHAT WE LOVED, AND WE LOVED WHAT WE DID"

DIMEBAG DARRELL

and Corey sent back a tape of him singing on the second verse, breakdown, and final chorus just in time.

"One of my favourite voicemails I ever had was from Dimebag right after I recorded *Fuck You* for the Damageplan album," says Corey now. "It was this three-minute message: 'Corey fucking Taylor, goddamn, you smashed this song of a bitch. What do you want? Do you want more money? Do you want a TV?! Motherfucker, fucker, fuck yeah!' And he just started singing the lyrics. I saved that voice message for the longest time."

The finished record, defiantly titled *New Found Power*, covered a lot of ground across its 14 songs. It tapped into familiar sounds and grooves, enhancing them with fresh textures, styles and vocals that alternately ripped and soothed. The title track sounded like an outtake from *Cowboys From Hell* crossed with *Chaos A.D.*-era Sepultura, and *Fuck You* was straight-up old-school hardcore hate.

Elsewhere, *Pride* included funk guitars, electro-production effects and a groove redolent of Incubus before blowing up Texas-style, while *Save Me* was early Tool filtered through latter-day Mudvayne, *Blink Of An Eye* was a stompier, Southern-fried Linkin Park (without the rapping), and *Moment Of Truth* got sludgy and brooding, with vibrato-laden vocals that resembled vintage Soundgarden.

"The bulk of it is in familiar territory – not a duplication of the past, but what it's rooted in," said vocalist Pat Lachman when I spoke to him at the time. "And there's some extreme stuff on either side of it. We weren't afraid to go off into other places that take a little more balls [to venture into] than being chained to what people expect from you."

It didn't take Damageplan long to get a deal for the finished album, signing with Elektra. *New Found Power* was released on February 10, 2004, reaching No.38 in the US charts – not as high as the last few Pantera albums, but a decent showing at a time when kiddie pop, pop-punk and the Strokes-led indie rock scene were the dominant musical styles.

The Abbott brothers were aware that they were more or less starting again from scratch now they no longer had the weight of the Pantera name behind them. But they relished the challenge of returning to small venues and working their way back up. Damageplan's first shows were in April 2004 on the MTV Headbangers Ball Tour, which included Hatebreed, Drowning Pool and Unearth. Over the next nine months, they shared other bills with Slayer and Disturbed and The Haunted.

Towards the end of the year, Damageplan were excited about wrapping up the New Found Power tour and returning home to decompress before continuing work on the band's second album, segments of which were partially recorded. Tragically, they never made it that far.

On December 8, 2004, during the band's concert at the Alrosa Villa club in Columbus, Ohio, Dimebag Darrell and three others were shot and killed by former marine Nathan Gale, who was himself shot by police officer James Niggemeyer.

The impact Dimebag's shocking murder had on the metal community was instant and widespread. Tributes poured in for a man who was seen as one of the greatest and most influential guitarists of his generation, and an icon within the metal scene.

Dimebag's death understandably marked the end of Damageplan. When Vinnie Paul returned to music two years later, it was with a new band, Hellyeah, alongside moonlighting Mudvayne singer Chad Gray. Few fans revisited *New Found Power* in subsequent years, not because it wasn't a good record, but because it was a painful reminder of the tragic and pointless way in which Dimebag's life had ended.

Today, with the benefit of hindsight, Damageplan's sole album holds up well. Dimebag and Vinnie – who passed away in 2018 – were able to bounce back from Pantera's acrimonious end to create something that found them attempting to break out of their comfort zone without abandoning their identity. The biggest problem Damageplan faced during their brief existence was that they could never quite escape the shadow of Pantera, though it wasn't for lack of trying on Dime and Vinnie's part.

"I realise that me and Dime have been very influential over a lot of bands over the years," Vinnie told me back in 2004. "We hear our sound in tons of new bands, and we still feel like we bring something to the table that's very relevant. We wanted to steal some of those old elements back and also take a little from what these newer bands do. So, we did everything from old school to new school. I feel like we've earned the right to do that. And I think we did it right."

They did. It's just a damn shame they never got the chance to do it again.

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Guitar Hero was the ultimate 2000s metal videogame. How would teenage thrashers Tortured Demon handle something that was massive when they were still in nappies?

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL • PICTURES: KEVIN NIXON

In the 90s and early 00s, metal and videogames had a good thing going. The *Doom* soundtracks featured bowel-shaking heaviness, while the music for spiritual successor *Quake* was written by Trent Reznor. In 1999, the composers of the *Duke Nukem* soundtrack released a *Music To Score By* (geddit?) – a compilation of their influences ranging from Megadeth to Type O Negative. That year, we got the Iron Maiden-endorsed first-person shooter *Ed Hunter*, while the band's music also appeared in *Carmageddon*. By the turn of the century, it was all about the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* soundtracks (Anthrax and Papa Roach, anyone?).

But when publisher RedOctane enlisted game developer Harmonix to make the first *Guitar Hero* in 2005, everything changed. Now the music *was* the game, and anyone could play out their rock star fantasies with a plastic replica guitar and a bunch of songs from the likes of Slayer, Lamb Of God, Anthrax, Slipknot, Avenged Sevenfold and many more.

On paper, *Guitar Hero* should have been a niche game for a small group of rock music obsessives. In reality, it was a smash hit and a cultural phenomenon so huge they even

"*GUITAR HERO* WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW ZAKK WYLDE"

JACOB PARKINSON

made an episode of *South Park* about it. More importantly, it was an entry point for many kids to get into metal, lighting a rocket under Dragonforce's career in the process.

But as with all trends, its moment passed, and today *Guitar Hero* sits largely forgotten and unloved in a drawer marked 'I♥The 00s' next to Crazy Frog, Napster and Wheatus, meaning subsequent generations have missed out on the joy of wielding a plastic 'axe' while trying desperately to master *Through The Fire And Flames*.

Tortured Demon (left to right): Joe Parkinson, Jacob Parkinson, Billy Hourigan

'Tis war!

How do you get across the sense of just how important *Guitar Hero* was? Well, you could enlist a band who were far too young to play it when it first came out and see if it still holds the same thrilling allure. Which is what we've done.

The band in question are up-and-coming UK thrashers Tortured Demon. That's vocalist and guitarist Jacob Parkinson (17), his drumming brother Joe (19) and lead guitarist Billy Hourigan (19), who – fresh from releasing their killer second album, *Rise Of The Lifeless* – have travelled down from their native Manchester to *Hammer*'s central London office to try their hand at a game that's almost as old as they are. "Retro gaming", as they put it. Ouch.

Our first challenge, having bought an old Xbox and all the kit on eBay, is to set everything up. *Guitar Hero* wasn't the usual sit-and-veg-out-with-your-controller-in-your-hand kind of deal, and as we take the iconic plastic guitars out of a battered cardboard box, they still look as gloriously tactile and ridiculous as ever to us. Shame we can't get them to connect to the console. It's at this point that Tortured Demon arrive on the scene.

"Oh wow," beams Jacob. "This takes me back!"

Excuse us, takes you back?

"Yeah," he nods. "Our dad bought us this game from a car boot sale when we were little."

So, you've all played it? Well, that's scuppered our plans to teach these young whippersnappers exactly how we used to play games in ye olden days…

"I haven't," shrugs Billy. "I don't know what I'm doing here."

In fairness neither do we, at least when it comes to setting up the kit. We've been fiddling with it for 20 minutes, trying to link the controller to no avail. Jacob manages it within five seconds. That's in no way an embarrassing start.

We've loaded 2009's *Guitar Hero 5* into the console, and hand control over to Jacob, since he's obviously such a pro. He sets up a battle between his brother and absolute newbie Billy, sticking his confused-looking bandmate on the Hard difficulty setting as well. We've not even started and already it's a stitch-up.

The first thing the boys have to do is pick a song, and it's here where *Guitar Hero*'s charms are brought into sharp focus for metal fans. Nestled among songs by Kaiser Chiefs, Duran Duran and Coldplay are anthems by likes of Iron Maiden, Darkest Hour and Children Of Bodom. It's hard to properly convey how much of a shock it was for 'our bands' to be listed alongside chart-topping artists.

"There's so many of these bands that I had never heard of until I played this game," says Joe, as he opts for Megadeth's *Sweating Bullets*. "I think that this was possibly the first time that I'd ever heard Megadeth before."

It's a point worth hammering home. It wasn't just games company Activision, who brought *Guitar Hero* from RedOctane and helped turn it into such a massive hit, who saw the benefits of the game's success. Many of the artists that featured on the game saw a massive upturn in fortunes. Dragonforce would surely just be another underground power metal band without it, while Lamb Of God's Randy Blythe acknowledged they benefitted massively from the inclusion of *Laid To Rest*.

"So many people were turned onto our band by hearing that version of our song," he told *Hammer* in 2019. It gave metal a platform to invade the homes of millions of gamers who had no idea who Black Sabbath or Metallica were, let alone Helmet and The Devil Wears Prada.

As the screen brings the two fretboards into focus we're filled with a rush of nostalgia. So distracted are we that we've forgotten to tell Billy exactly how to use the guitar, and he's confusingly just tapping away at it.

You've got to strum and hold the correct fret button down as the notes go by, Billy!

"Oh, I see," he says. "That makes sense, I guess."

What instrument do you play again, Billy?

"Guitar."

Cool.

On the other side, Joe has picked up where he left off when he was, like, nine years old. Confidently tapping away in time and racking up an impressive score. At the song's end, he's the clear winner.

How did you feel during your first time, Billy?

"Yeah, it's pretty cool," the guitarist says. "I can see why people would have liked this if they couldn't play the guitar."

Did it bear any resemblance to playing a real guitar to you?

"It did actually, yeah," he says with a non-committal shrug.

Our Steve attempting to show the whippersnappers how it's done...

For those who actually took the time to master an instrument, the appeal of *Guitar Hero* was limited.

Some musos even reacted aggressively to the game, believing it a tool to destroy 'real' music. Chad Kroeger of Nickelback was one of many to speak out against it, telling MTV in 2008 that people should "set down the *Guitar Hero*, learn how to play an actual guitar and start a band".

Obviously if your band are going to sound like Nickelback, maybe do just stick to *Guitar Hero*.

It's not something that Tortured Demon agree with, as Jacob enthusiastically loads up our copy of 2008's *Guitar Hero World Tour* and challenges his brother to a run-through of Black Label Society's *Stillborn*.

"I remember there were all these downloadable characters," he says, beaming. "It was the first time I'd actually ever seen Zakk Wylde. I was like, 'Fuck, this guy is so cool! I don't know who he is, but I want to be like him.' It made me want to pick up a guitar."

Do you think you'd have felt like that if you downloaded Chad Kroeger, Jacob?

"[Diplomatically] I wouldn't like to say."

Fair. The two brothers are genuinely good at this game, enthusiastically headbanging along and singing the song as they effortlessly rack up a massive score.

To try and trip them up, we request Beastie Boys' *No Sleep Till Brooklyn* to see if they can nail that Kerry King solo, which they do, before sticking it on Expert mode and giving them Motörhead's *Overkill*. They nail that, too. You guys are great!

"I'm getting such big feelings of nostalgia!" says Jacob, who, we should reiterate, is 17 and hence at least 10 years away from being able to legitimately get nostalgic about anything.

Billy gets back on with Joe to run through Jane's Addiction's late 80s alt rock classic *Mountain Song*.

"I don't know this song," Joe admits. "I wish I'd been around in the 2000s so that I could have got into all these bands while they were in their prime. I'd have loved that."

It's a shame *Guitar Hero* appears to have been consigned to the dustbin of history. Metal could certainly do with another mainstream push like the one it received back then.

"Definitely," says Joe while skilfully navigating a Dave Navarro riff. "I know we'd love to have our band on something like this. It must have been such a thrill to turn that console on and see your song there."

"WE'D LOVE TO HAVE OUR BAND ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS"

JOE PARKINSON

In 2007, Harmonix – now owned by MTV – launched *Rock Band*, a similar game that introduced new instruments. *Guitar Hero* followed suit, with a drum kit and a microphone. Unfortunately, due to an overwhelming flurry of releases, plus a decrease in revenue once the instruments had been purchased, the game began to struggle. In 2011 new releases were put on ice, with support relegated to a trickle of new tracks as downloadable content.

Did any of you boys have the drum kit?

"Nah," says Joe. "I had a real drum kit."

There was also the spin-off *DJ Hero*, launched in 2009 as Activision's shameless attempt to cash in on EDM's spike in popularity as rock's commercial power was waning. Did Tortured Demon ever play *DJ Hero* when they were kids? They all pull a face as if someone's wafted a recently used cat litter tray beneath their noses.

"Now that I've not heard of," splurts Jacob. "Who would want that?!"

Enough of all this standing on the sidelines. Despite having no real guitar-playing skills (small hands, if you're asking) your *Metal Hammer* correspondent was quite the whizz at *Guitar Hero* back in the day. It's time to show these new dogs some old tricks.

Even though Jacob is competent and Billy's massively improved, Joe is the MVP of the group, and he must be taken down a peg or two. Our challenge is accepted and we choose Michael Jackson's *Beat It*, hoping to lull Joe into a false sense of security before that Eddie Van Halen solo kicks in and knocks him way off track.

Pumped up, we grab our axe, commit to a power stance and wait to hit that first power chord when… our guitar runs out of charge.

"That's pretty convenient," Joe says sarcastically, showing a shocking lack of respect in the presence of someone who was blazing through Pantera's *Cowboys From Hell* on a plastic guitar when he was still learning to pick his own nose.

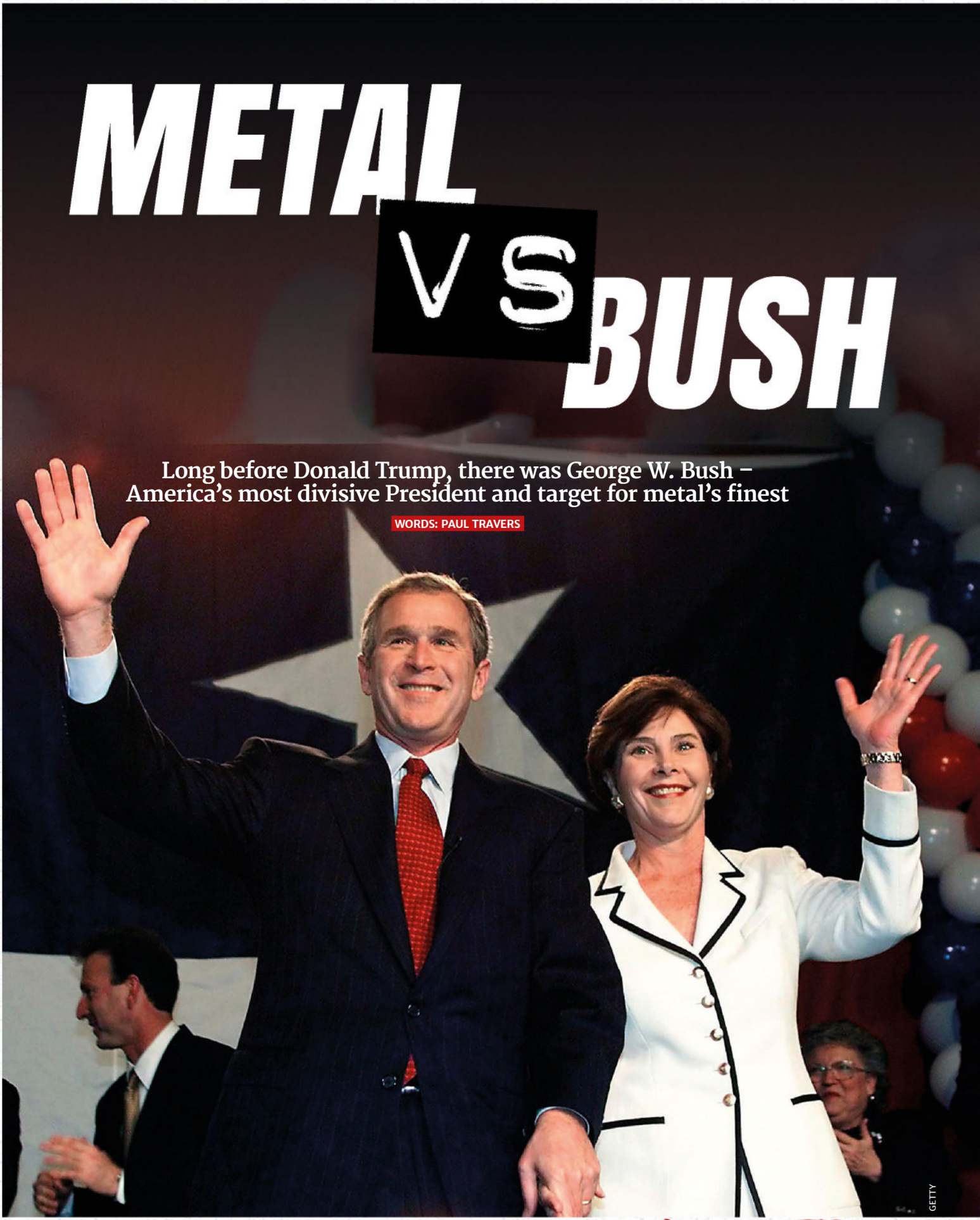
Crushed, we put down our depleted axes and call it a day. Activision's boss has suggested AI developments could lead to the return of *Guitar Hero*. Maybe then we'll finally get the chance to wipe the smile off Joe's face.

TORTURED DEMON'S *RISE OF THE LIFELESS* IS OUT NOW

METAL VS BUSH

Long before Donald Trump, there was George W. Bush – America's most divisive President and target for metal's finest

WORDS: PAUL TRAVERS



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George W. Bush became the 43rd President of the USA in controversial fashion, after losing the popular vote and benefiting from a Supreme Court decision against Democrat opponent Al Gore in the 2000 election.

"I don't want to sound like these nutwings now saying Trump won the Biden election – that wasn't even close – but we should have won that one," sighs Al Jourgensen today.

The Ministry mainman has a closer adversarial relationship with Bush than most, having released a trilogy of albums – 2004's *Houses Of The Molé*, 2006's *Rio Grande Blood* and 2007's *The Last Sucker* – dedicated to lambasting the man and his Republican administration. Ministry were not alone in their reaction to Bush, however, and particularly his 'war on terror'. While Jourgensen will happily and knowledgeably denounce Bush's domestic pre-presidential record as the governor of Texas, it was the 9/11 attacks and his reactions to it that both defined his presidency and set a chain of events in motion that are still impacting the global stage.

A week before the attacks on the Twin Towers, System Of A Down released their second album, *Toxicity*. They got the call to tell them they'd hit the No.1 slot pretty much as they were taking place. Vocalist Serj Tankian responded by penning an online essay titled 'Understanding Oil'. In it, he questioned America's foreign policy in the Middle East and pointed out that no one was asking why these people did this "horrific act of violence and destruction". The backlash was instant, with even his bandmates suggesting he'd gone too far.

"I remember John [Dolmayan, System drummer] asking me, 'You're a smart guy, what the fuck are you doing? Are you trying to get us killed?'" Serj told *Metal Hammer* in 2021. "That's literally what he told me. I felt so bad. I love these guys and here I am touring with them, and I'm like, 'I'm so sorry – it's the truth, I swear it's the truth.'"

As the War On Terror turned to war in Afghanistan and then Iraq, System did address the developing situation with songs like *Boom!* – with its video highlighting anti-war marches and featuring cartoons of Bush, Tony Blair, Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden as goons of the Apocalypse – and *B.Y.O.B.* (standing for 'bring your own bombs').

"THE SYSTEM THAT CREATED BUSH CREATED DONALD TRUMP"

AL JOURGENSEN

Elsewhere, Lamb Of God released their own furious take on the war on terror with their breakthrough 2004 album, *Ashes Of The Wake*.

"The best I can do is talk to people and write about it, and hope that people will open their eyes, stop being such apathetic cows and get out and vote," singer Randy Blythe told *Now Toronto*. "We have got to get that monkey out of the office before he kills us all."

On Bush's re-election in 2004, Nine Inch Nails mastermind Trent Reznor posted: "The one-two combo of corporate greed and organised religion apparently proved too much for reason, sanity and compassion. It's a sad and shameful day to be an American." NIN subsequently dropped out of the 2005 MTV Movie Awards when told they couldn't use an image of Bush in their performance.

The big names were coming out swinging, but not everyone was so critical. Avenged Sevenfold seemed to go beyond 'condemn the war, support the troops' sentiments with the rants of 2007 single *Critical Acclaim*. But what was really lacking was a groundswell of politicisation running right through the metal scene the way it had during thrash's heyday or that had always been present in hardcore. Spearheaded by Fat Mike of NOFX, the punk scene produced two Rock Against Bush albums, shows, tours and a Punkvoter coalition that aimed to "turn millions of punk fans into a political force to be reckoned with".

Not that it did much good for Ministry, who Al Jourgensen says spent years working with voter registration drives only to see George W. Bush win twice. So does he believe the musical protests achieved anything?

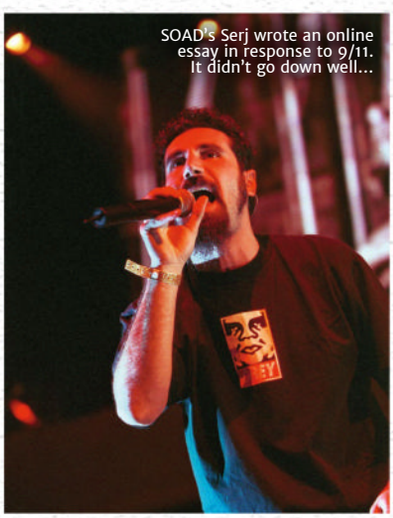
"Probably not," he says. "It's probably hurt me in a lot of financial ways, but it makes me feel better at least getting it off my chest."

As for 'Dubya' himself, the Ministry frontman's views changed even over the course of his band's of Bush-centred trilogy.

"At the beginning I was not happy with the man," explains Al. "All Georgy wanted to do was prove to his dad that he's not a failure and a fuck-up. There's an egocentric daddy Freudian relationship going on with how many people died and how our economy suffered but by the end I was like, 'This guy's just a fucking dolt. He's a puppet of the system and it's the system that needs railing against.' What started with Bush created the monster that is Trump. It's the system that creates these monsters and I don't know what it's going to take to break the system." H

Ministry's Al Jourgensen: not voting Republican any time soon

LOG's Randy Blythe wants people to get off their arses and vote for change


SOAD's Serj wrote an online essay in response to 9/11. It didn't go down well...

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THE 50 GREATEST ALBUMS OF THE 2000s

Nu metal, melodeath, metalcore, industrial and a man in a ridiculous catsuit – this is the ultimate soundtrack to the decade

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE, ANDY BROWN, ARCTIC SINGLEWORTH, ALEX DELLER, DAVE EVERLEY, STEPHEN HILL, RICH HOBSON, DOM LAWSON, MATT MILLS, CATHERINE MORRIS, KEVIN STEWART-PANKO, PAUL TRAVERS

50 JUDAS PRIEST
Angel Of Retribution (2005)

Rob Halford's return to the mighty Judas Priest would have been seriously big news even if they hadn't produced an album worthy of their legacy, but *Angel Of Retribution*'s urgency and fury picked up right where *Painkiller* left off back in 1990. The dual guitar assault of K.K. Downing and Glenn Tipton was as potent as ever, but Rob Halford's shrieking histrionics felt like the Metal God truly reclaiming his kingdom.

Key track: *Judas Rising*

49 ARCH ENEMY
Anthems Of Rebellion (2003)

Following her Arch Enemy debut on 2002's *Wages Of Sin* album, *Anthems Of Rebellion* introduced vocalist Angela Gossow to the metal world at large courtesy of battering lead single and the band's most successful song to date, *We Will Rise*. Gleamingly produced and riddled with hooks but still ferociously heavy, *Anthems Of Rebellion* is a major high point for early 2000s melodeath.

Key track: *We Will Rise*

Arch Enemy: Angela Gossow sang the barnstorming *We Will Rise*

48 THE DARKNESS
Permission To Land (2003)

Looking back, it's wild to think that a bunch of Queen nuts from a Suffolk coastal town fronted by a man with an outrageous falsetto and a wardrobe full of catsuits could notch up a million-selling debut album while nu metal was still huge. But that's exactly what The Darkness did, delivering a set of over-the-top hard rock anthems with *Permission To Land*. It was massive fun while it lasted.

Key track: *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*

47 CLUTCH
Blast Tyrant (2004)

Clutch had already evolved from a bunch of scrappy hardcore punks into a fantastic stoner blues band, but they'd never created such an undeniable set of anthemic bangers as they did on their sixth album. *Blast Tyrant* cut down on the jams and was instead comprised solely of massive groove riffs and Neil Fallon's mad preacher hooks, converting many to the Church of Clutch.

Key track: *The Mob Goes Wild*

46 VELVET REVOLVER
Contraband (2004)

Ex-Guns N' Roses trio Slash, Duff McKagan and Matt Sorum enlisted wayward Stone Temple Pilots frontman Scott Weiland for an album that bottled GN'R's original spirit way better than Axl Rose would with the indigestible *Chinese Democracy* four years later. Velvet Revolver's debut delivered a modern update of their snake-hipped rock'n'roll on *Slither* and *Sucker Train Blues*, but it was epic heart-on-sleeve anthem *Fall To Pieces* that showed their class.

Key track: *Fall To Pieces*

PRESS

45 THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN
Ire Works (2007)

Prior to *Ire Works*, the idea of these mathcore provocateurs dealing in hooks, choruses and decipherable song structures appeared to be a ridiculous notion. But their third album took the wild, unhinged catharsis of their early work and somehow made it palatable and translatable to the bigger stages the band were now playing. It was still outrageously intense, of course, but also superbly catchy.
Key track: *Milk Lizard*

44 ALTER BRIDGE
Blackbird (2007)

Despite their brilliant debut, *One Day Remains*, Alter Bridge were still being unfairly dismissed due to their members' previous success in Creed. That all changed with *Blackbird*'s magnificent blend of Mark Tremonti's virtuosity, Myles Kennedy's transcendent pipes, and gallant anthems. The likes of *Rise Today*, *Watch Over You* and the epic title track were custom-made for 10,000-strong singalongs.
Key track: *Blackbird*

43 AT THE DRIVE-IN
Relationship Of Command (2000)

At The Drive-In's delicious mix of post-hardcore energy, Latin rhythms, bizarre lyrical narratives and unhinged live performances was perfected on this, their third album, and was a welcome alternative to some of the formulaic nu metal clogging up the charts. The band seemed all set to become the Nirvana of the 2000s, but their musical cocktail (and drug habits) proved too combustible and, frustratingly, they imploded soon after *Relationship Of Command*'s release.
Key track: *One Armed Scissor*

42 QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
Songs For The Deaf (2002)

Emerging from the ashes of Kyuss, QOTSA wowed the stoner crowd with their fuzzy, motorik debut before crossing over with 2000's drug-blasted *Rated R*. Wonderfully odd and blearily catchy, *Songs For The Deaf* catapulted them into the major leagues. It marked them as one of the planet's most formidable rock acts, and even lured Dave Grohl back behind the drumkit.
Key track: *Go With The Flow*

41 MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE
The Black Parade (2006)

With their third album, My Chemical Romance transformed from leaders of the emo pack into a genre-spanning outfit entirely in their own field. A grand concept album filled with stirring songs, aesthetics and storytelling, it redefined what a rock band could be, riling the hysterical likes of the *Daily Mail* in the process, which is always a bonus.
Key track: *Welcome To The Black Parade*

Megadeth: *Endgame* was a resounding triumph

PRESS

40 THE DEVIN TOWNSEND PROJECT
Addicted (2009)

When Devin says he's writing an album, it usually means he's actually writing four. *Addicted* was his second album of 2009 (lazy, frankly), following the ambient *Ki*, and saw him set out to make his most danceable-yet-heavy album to date. With an uplifting wall of sound and luscious vocals from the divinely talented Anneke van Giersbergen, we'd say he succeeded.
Key track: *Hyperdrive!*

39 NINE INCH NAILS
With Teeth (2005)

After the painful creation of 1999's mammoth double album, *The Fragile*, led to depression and stints in rehab, Trent Reznor returned six years later with a more streamlined and song-orientated Nine Inch Nails. The result was the most instantaneous and upbeat collection of songs he'd ever created. Trent's signature self-loathing and revulsion remained, it was just channelled into club-ready ragers.
Key track: *The Hand That Feeds*

38 CRADLE OF FILTH
Midian (2000)

By their fourth album, Cradle had already set out their theatrical stall as a unique force in extreme music. *Midian* saw them doubling down on the symphonic metal as usurpers like Dimmu Borgir encroached. It also saw them obsessing over horror writer Clive Barker's mythical Midian – the place where the monsters go.
Key track: *Her Ghost In The Fog*

37 MEGADETH
Endgame (2009)

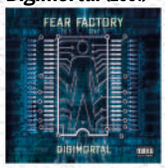
Megadeth fans were optimistic as the band readied their 12th album, but no one was expecting *Endgame* to be *this* magnificent. Dave Mustaine wrote some of his finest ever songs and every musician played his merry bollocks off throughout. Whether delivering thrash euphoria (*This Day We Fight!*) or plunging into dark, progressive waters (*Endgame*), this was an unequivocal triumph and one of the finest metal albums of not just the 2000s but of the 21st century so far.
Key track: *Endgame*

Within Temptation led the symphonic scene into a new era

36 WITHIN TEMPTATION
The Silent Force (2004)

By the time Within Temptation released their third album, symphonic metal had found its voice, and the Dutch band were right there in the vanguard. Where 2000's breakthrough, *Mother Earth*, had tempered its grandiosity with folkier elements, Sharon den Adel and co splashed some serious cash on the follow-up, enlisting an orchestra and full choir to help realise their grand vision. It was well worth it. *The Silent Force* saw the band tighten up every aspect of their sound, adding musical heft and glossy production to create a symphonic metal blockbuster. The album featured some of the band's best-loved songs – namely *Stand My Ground, Angels* and *Jillian (I'd Give My Heart)* – but it was the cumulative effect of the album that announced Within Temptation as stars-in-waiting and helped kick the symphonic metal scene forward.
Key track: *Stand My Ground*

35 FEAR FACTORY
Digimortal (2001)



Despite the inclusion of the divisive *Back The Fuck Up* that paired the band's musical cyber-terrorism with rappers Cypress Hill, Fear Factory's distinctive drill-press metal drove hard on *Digimortal*. Guitars and vocals may have explored alt rock expansiveness as rhythms flirted with dance floors, but it still sounded like the Terminator trying to mine ear canals.
Key track: *Linchpin*

34 METALLICA
Death Magnetic (2008)

After 2003's *St. Anger* got a richly deserved kicking from Metallica's fans – mainly thanks to its appalling production job – The Four Horsemen teamed up with the biggest producer in the game, Rick Rubin, to try to get themselves back on track. Out were snare drums that sounded like a potato being lobbed at a pan; in were metal anthems and the return of solos. Hooray! Metallica were back, baby!
Key track: *The Day That Never Comes*

33 AMON AMARTH
Twilight Of The Thunder God (2008)

Even for a band with such a heroic recording output, *Twilight Of The Thunder God* was a watershed moment for the Viking-obsessed Swedes. Their meticulous melodic death metal rallying cry spread to new realms, thanks to the heroic storytelling of the title track and *Guardians Of Asgaard*, with frontman Johan Hegg becoming a poster boy for a generation of berserkers.
Key track: *Twilight Of The Thunder God*

32 CHILDREN OF BODOM
Follow The Reaper (2000)

Everything anyone could ever want from a ludicrous extreme metal album was lobbed out over the nine songs and 38 minutes that made up Children Of Bodom's third album. Alexi Laiho's neoclassical guitars and Janne Wirman's keyboards were in perfect sync, each player melodic, technical and seamlessly segueing into the other. Extreme metal may present itself as evil, but this masterstroke zeroed in on the silliness at its heart and cranked it up to 11 for the world to adore.
Key track: *Everytime I Die*

31 HIM
Razorblade Romance (2000)

Frontman Ville Valo really hit his lovelorn, melancholic stride on *Razorblade Romance*, Him's second album. With the trifecta of heart-stopping melodies, ardently poetic lyrics and fuck-off riffs, the album sent the Finns into the stratosphere, going to No.1 in their home country as well as others. Gothic romance in excelsis.
Key track: *Join Me In Death*

30 MESHUGGAH
Obzen (2008)

Most of the 00s saw Meshuggah arguably stuck in a holding pattern – well, as much as inertia can plague Umeå's patrons of the polyrhythm, that is. But *Obzen* quickly dispelled all notions of paralysis as it distilled the rubber-scalding speed, monochromatic bellowing, space age soloing and herky-jerky rhythmic complication of their previous five albums into one explosive package.
Key track: *Bleed*

29 A PERFECT CIRCLE
Mer De Noms (2000)

Who would have thought that a side-project founded by a guitar tech would become one of the nascent century's most iconic acts? Billy Howerdel went from turning pegs for Nine Inch Nails and The Smashing Pumpkins to crafting towering anthems with Tool's Maynard James Keenan, in a band that offered their own unique and influential take on 2000s alt rock.
Key track: *The Hollow*

28 SLAYER
God Hates Us All (2001)

After critics and fans lambasted Slayer for *Diabolus In Musica*'s uncharacteristic experimentation, the band put their heads down with the intent of peeling back flesh and writing some of the rawest high-speed thrash and mid-paced churning of their career. Result! However, this violent album happened to be released on 9/11, with Slayer suddenly finding themselves knee-deep in controversy.
Key track: *Disciple*

PRESS

Converge: rulebook? What rulebook?

27 CONVERGE
Jane Doe (2001)

Alongside the likes of Botch, Cave In and The Dillinger Escape Plan, Converge spent the late 90s messily rewiring metallic hardcore. Here their incendiary work exploded outward, rewriting the rulebook for metal, grind and hardcore alike.

A monstrous, pained epic that remains a benchmark to this day, the album spawned countless copycats and innumerable *Jane* tattoos.

Key track: *Jane Doe*

Admit it: you can't even *look* at this photo without singing monkey noises!

PRESS

Dimmu: spectacularly OTT

26 DIMMU BORGIR
Puritanical Euphoric Misanthropia (2001)

Cementing their now classic line-up and employing an orchestra for the first time, the Norwegians' fifth album found them severing any remaining, threadbare links with the black metal underground.

Gloriously bombastic and sumptuously produced, Dimmu Borgir's opulent scope and ambition was finally realised, setting the stage for the symphonic metal arms race that would begin.

Key track: *Kings Of The Carnival Creation*

25 DISTURBED
The Sickness (2000)

Emerging alongside the likes of Linkin Park and Papa Roach, Disturbed were seen as part of nu metal's second major ejaculation, even if they kicked against the tag. To be fair, they did always have a classic metal leaning, while vocalist David Draiman's baritone boom and operatic wail extended far beyond the usual Cookie Monster growls and raps of many of his peers. There were enough binary riffs and chunky, syncopated grooves to fit in with the musical landscape of the day, though, and – propelled by the irresistible crunch and unmistakable *'Ooh-wah-ah-ah-ah'* intro of second single *Down With The Sickness* – they became one of the biggest-selling bands of the nu metal era. They also divided opinion, becoming the band the music media loved to hate even as their debut album headed for multi-platinum status and *Down With The Sickness* got wallet chains and ultra-baggy JNCO jeans swinging on dancefloors worldwide.

Key track: *Down With The Sickness*

DISTURBED GOT ULTRA-BAGGY JNCO JEANS SWINGING ON DANCEFLOORS

24 BRING ME THE HORIZON

Suicide Season (2008)

BMTH's debut, *Count Your Blessings*, was the sound of kids making a noise in their room, but this follow-up album hinted that they would become something bigger and better. The spasmodic digital effects synonymous with the band crept in alongside the usual gang vocals and beatdowns, while *Chelsea Smile*'s vocal hook is a winner to this day, and the title track's eight-minute duration is a sprawling display of sonic misery. The sound of a band starting to push at the boundaries of who they are.

Key track: *Chelsea Smile*

23 AUDIOSLAVE

Audioslave (2002)

They were the rhythm section of Rage Against The Machine with the singer from Soundgarden. Yet, somehow Audioslave were even more than the sum of their parts, tapping into the sheer enormity of 70s stadium rock while infusing it with the fragility of grunge, never losing sight of the fact they were rock stars in the truest sense. Supergroups seldom come bigger or better.

Key Track: *Cochise*

22 LAMB OF GOD

Ashes Of The Wake (2004)

Taking up where Pantera left off, Lamb Of God had shouldered hulking, groove-laden metal into the 21st century. *Ashes...* was their major label breakthrough, given extra heft by producer Machine and inspired to new levels of anger by the unfolding war in Iraq. Metal had rarely sounded so brutally compelling.

Key track: *Laid To Rest*

21 IN FLAMES

Clayman (2000)

Proving that death metal could sound stadium-sized with the right production and big enough songs, In Flames and chief collaborator Fredrik Nordström polished up their hooks and drizzled them in synths, creating the catchiest set of tunes extreme metal had ever produced. So perfected was the Swedes' formula by this point that it has influenced generations of metalcore bands ever since.

Key track: *Only For The Weak*

AIC regenerated with William DuVall (right)

20 ALICE IN CHAINS

Black Gives Way To Blue (2009)

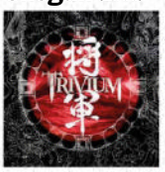
Alice in Chains without frontman Layne Staley seemed like an insane, impossible idea, but when the band's remaining members found vocalist William DuVall and channelled their feelings of loss and grief for their fallen bandmate, it resulted in one of the greatest comeback albums of the decade. *Black Gives Way To Blue* is a beautiful, often difficult, listen that regenerated an inconic 90s band for a new decade.

Key track: *Check My Brain*

Trivium: babyfaced but bursting with ideas

19 TRIVIUM

Shogun (2008)



Career wobble? What career wobble? Following their scintillating rise on the back of career-making second album *Ascendancy* and *that* Download performance, things were looking decidedly dodgy for Trivium after divisive follow-up *The Crusade*. But *Shogun* put the Florida band back on course and then some, building on what they'd achieved two albums earlier. *Ascendancy* had the romantic backstory, but *Shogun* matched it for songwriting, and trumped it in terms of scope and ambition. As epic and adventurous as the ancient mythology that inspired the songs, the band's ambitious ideas are fully realised on the prog-laden mini-saga of *Kirisute Gomen* and the jaw-dropping closing title track – the latter's frankly absurd crescendo arguably remains the band's best moment to date. Trivium went into *Shogun* with everything to play for and emerged victorious. It put them at the top of the 21st century's metal elite, where they remain today.

Key track: *Shogun*

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Lacuna Coil put Italian metal on the map

18 KORN
Untouchables (2002)

The stats around *Untouchables*' conception are eye-watering: costing more than $3 million to make, it still stands as one of the most expensive albums in history, catching Korn at their ambitious, defiant apex. Determined to make their grandest album yet, the band threw the kitchen sink at it; while the record itself disappointed commercially, sonically it sounded (and still sounds) gargantuan.
Key track: *Here To Stay*

17 BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE
The Poison (2005)

The Poison owes more to the post-hardcore stylings of fellow Welshmen Funeral For A Friend than to Converge or KSE, but the intoxicating mix of raw emotion, sweeping riffs and undeniable hooks made Bullet feel like champions from the off, the defiant roar of *Her Voice Resides* signalling that the US's dominance of metalcore wouldn't go as uncontested as it had for nu metal.
Key track: *Tears Don't Fall*

16 OPETH
Blackwater Park (2001)

The Swedes had arrived half a decade earlier as a brutal, if complex, death metal band before mutating into something else entirely. Refining their revolutionary take on extremity, *Blackwater Park* effortlessly moved between some of the most evocative riffs ever written and heartbreaking emotional depths in the most consummate fashion.
Key track: *The Drapery Falls*

15 IRON MAIDEN
Brave New World (2000)

Viewed from a distance, the Blaze Bayley era wasn't terrible, but fans seriously rejoiced when frontman Bruce Dickinson and guitarist Adrian Smith returned to the fold. The reunion also resulted in Maiden's finest album since the 80s. *Brave New World* was their first step into a new age that would see them regain their place at the top of the metal pile.
Key track: *The Wicker Man*

14 LACUNA COIL
Comalies (2002)

Lacuna Coil's third album, *Comalies*, was not just a breakthrough for them commercially, but a benchmark for gothic metal in general. With Cristina Scabbia's haunting, crystalline vocal at its heart, rounded out by grooving guitars and the vitriolic growls of Andrea Ferro, the album is a true cornerstone of the genre. In fact, it's so good they re-recorded it in 2022.
Key track: *Swamped*

13 PAPA ROACH
Infest (2000)

Their debut album barely made an impression, but after a 1999 demo bagged them a major label deal with Dreamworks, Papa Roach made the most of their opportunity, writing an album's worth of songs that a) directly appealed to angst-powered, millennial rock fans and b) absolutely slapped. The legacy of lead single *Last Resort* looms large today: more than a billion streams and counting? Sure.
Key track: *Last Resort*

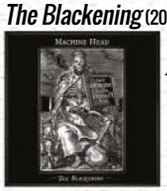
12 MASTODON
Crack The Skye (2009)

Any of Mastodon's 00s releases (*Remission*, *Leviathan*, *Blood Mountain*) could lay claim to being their crown jewel of the decade, but *Crack The Skye* is where the Atlantans irreverently explored their prog/classic/space rock aspirations and fantasies. That sonic and visual Easter eggs are still being discovered to this day speaks to the lush engagement the band's fourth album provided.
Key track: *Quintessence*

11 KILLSWITCH ENGAGE
The End Of Heartache (2004)

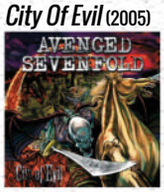
Losing singer Jesse Leach just as they were gaining momentum could have killed a lesser band, but Killswitch were made of sterner stuff. Enter Howard Jones: a honey-throated crooner whose romantic lyrics attracted metalcore fanatics and emo diehards in equal measure. Adam D crafted another bucketload of insta-classic bangers, and one of the 2000s' most influential metal records was born.
Key track: *The End Of Heartache*

10 MACHINE HEAD
The Blackening (2007)



2003's *Through The Ashes of Empires* might have halted the downward momentum of Machine Head's career, but no one saw *The Blackening* coming. Robb Flynn's men crafted as perfect a 2000s metal album as anyone could have wished for, all thrashing, pummelling, labyrinthine riffs and fist-pumping, euphoric calls to arms. Those *Master of Puppets* comparisons that followed it around were justified.
Key track: *Halo*

9 AVENGED SEVENFOLD
City Of Evil (2005)



City Of Evil didn't just reinvent Avenged Sevenfold's sound by injecting it with lashings of swaggering rock'n'roll and even more twin-guitar histrionics, it also saw Orange County's finest fully embrace their starring role as metalcore's cockiest, most rock star-ish band. The likes of *Bat Country* and *Beast And The Harlot* have rightly become regarded as generational classics.
Key track: *Beast And The Harlot*

8 NIGHTWISH
Once (2004)

The album that catapulted these Finnish symphonic metal trailblazers to stardom overseas would also be the last they recorded with original vocalist Tarja Turunen. With some of their most radio-friendly tracks (see: *Nemo*) as well as their most ambitious (*Ghost Love Score*), *Once* is the sound of a band throwing absolutely everything

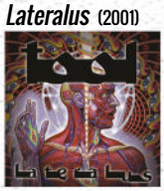
PRESS

they've got at a record, and a fine swansong for Tarja.
Key track: *Ghost Love Score*

7 LIMP BIZKIT
Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water (2000)

Love it or hate it, you couldn't ignore it: *Chocolate Starfish...* represented the End Of Level Boss of nu metal's evolution from subversive, fringe newcomer of metal to the globe-straddling, obnoxious behemoth it became. Packing enough classics to fill a greatest hits set, it sold more than a million copies in a week, confirming Bizkit as the biggest rock band of their g-g-generation.
Key track: *Rollin' (Air Raid Vehicle)*

6 TOOL
Lateralus (2001)



The moment Tool completed their metamorphosis from alt metal agitators to prog metal masterminds, *Lateralus* showed them at their most complex and intelligent, the band somehow shining even brighter with their architectural song structures and Fibonacci-sequence inspired riffs. Even more impressively, *Schism*, *Parabola* and *Lateralus* itself showed they hadn't lost their touch for massive, shit-kicking anthems amid the tantric melodies and spacey vibes.
Key track: *Lateralus*

5 EVANESCENCE
Fallen (2003)

On Evanescence's debut album, pianist and mezzo-soprano Amy Lee sought to marry the melodrama of classical music with the stylings of hard rock and alternative. Together with collaborator Ben Moody, she crafted a truly unique offering in *Fallen*: with symphonic metal still somewhat confined to European shores, the combination of nu metal guitar riffs with rich orchestral elements (all real) and Amy's powerful voice was too good to resist, and immediately broke into the Top 20 on multiple continents. Though the singer has expressed regret at the album's more commercial moments (like the shoehorned-in rap on *Bring Me To Life*) in the years since, there's no denying the impact of *Fallen* in paving the way for young female vocalists, and bringing gothic rock to the airwaves.
Key track: *Bring Me To Life*

Deftones: coming out of leftfield

4 DEFTONES
White Pony (2000)

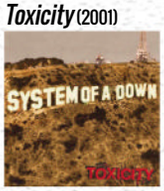
The moment where Deftones stepped away from a nu metal scene that, as they expertly proved here, was fast running out of ideas. *White Pony* has gone on to become the Sacramento band's definitive musical statement, but when it was first released it took a while for some to get onboard, such was its grandiose leap from the chunky, staccato riffs of their previous work to this multi-layered, ambient soundscape and trip-hop-inspired masterpiece. The correlation with Radiohead's equally revolutionary 1997 album *OK Computer* has been parroted to the point of exhaustion decades down the line, but it remains the bullseye comparison. Both were darker, more experimental and uniquely progressive without ever forgetting to serve their magnificent songs, putting both bands in a field of one.
Key track: *Passenger*

2 SLIPKNOT
Iowa (2001)

It wasn't the intrusive press and 'true metal-head' gatekeepers pejoratively pigeon-holing the boilersuited nonet as nu metal and the future thereof that sparked *Iowa*'s acrimonious darkness. Behind the scenes, Slipknot were suffering from the success of their self-titled 1999 debut. Personal relationships were frayed, substances were abused, crippling debt was accrued and members were having trouble managing being in the public eye. When they were eventually able to shut out the outside world – precisely the theme of *People = Shit* – and focus, what emerged was an all-encompassing volatility delivered via an overflowing handful of rallying-cry anthems that codified internal frustration and disgust in a way that connected with millions to the tune of gold and platinum sales around the world.
Key track: *The Heretic Anthem*

SOAD: chaos magnets

3 SYSTEM OF A DOWN
Toxicity (2001)



With their planned launch show descending into a riot and the 9/11 attacks occurring a week later, System Of A Down's second album was born into turbulent times. The band learned they were headed for the No.1 US album slot on the day of the attacks and, while later records would deal with the fallout of 9/11, *Toxicity* provided a suitable soundtrack to the unfolding global chaos. Musically, it built on their 1998 self-titled debut, exploding in unpredictable patterns and defying easy nu metal classifications. Lyrically, it leaped like a frog on a hotplate, alighting on subjects including addiction and suicide (*Chop Suey!*), mandatory sentencing (*Prison Song*) and, uh, allegorical pogo sticks (*Bounce*). In the process it also established System as the biggest emerging metal band on the planet.
Key track: *Chop Suey!*

Slipknot: pissed off and out for blood

PRESS: SOAD: GETTY/MICK HUTSON

Linkin Park bottled magic with *Hybrid Theory*

1 LINKIN PARK

Hybrid Theory (2000)

IF KORN'S SELF-TITLED debut album defined nu metal in the 1990s, Linkin Park's *Hybrid Theory* redefined it for the 2000s. Stripping back the frat-boy swagger that had come to define the scene, the LA six-piece delivered an album that laid a layer of all-too-human angst over its hip hop/metal/industrial fusion. The result was a monster commercial hit that would do much to define the sound and style of the entire decade, influencing a generation of kids to form bands, among them Bring Me The Horizon and Architects.

Part of *Hybrid Theory*'s success was its directness. Nu metal was becoming bloated on its own success – Limp Bizkit's *Chocolate Starfish...*, released one week earlier, clocked in at a patience-testing 75 minutes. By contrast, this was the model of compactness at just 37 minutes, not one single second of which was wasted.

But brevity alone wasn't what made it so great. *Hybrid Theory*'s impact was largely down the brilliance of its songs. *Papercut, One Step Closer, Crawling, In The End, Points Of Authority* – these were perfectly shaped anthems that were unafraid of leaning on other forms of music, whether it was the layered textures of electronic music or pop's melodic endorphine rush. Then there was Linkin Park's signature move: the deft vocal trade-off between singer Chester Bennington and rapper Mike Shinoda. Bands had featured two singers before, but rarely had they merged so seamlessly as they did here.

There was plenty of pushback, of course. The band were sneeringly written off in some quarters as a 'boy band', proving that gatekeepers were just as dumb back then as they are today. But no one could stop the tidal wave: from MTV to the dancefloor of your local rock club, Linkin Park were absolutely inescapable. *Hybrid Theory* went platinum in the United States within just three months; by the end of the 2000s it had sold a staggering 10 million copies.

Linkin Park's subsequent journey would take many musical turns before it ended with the all-too-premature death of Chester Bennington in July 2017. Some of those turns took them further away from *Hybrid Theory*, others brought them back closer to it. They never quite captured the magic they did here, but then neither did anybody else.

Key track: *In The End*

PRESS/JAMES MINCHIN

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GHOUL'S OUT!

Joey Jordison's glam-punk side-project Murderdolls worshipped horror movies and pissed off Billy Idol. As Wednesday 13 remembers, it was a side of the Slipknot drummer that fans had never seen before

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

If Wednesday 13 has anyone to thank for getting him the job as the singer in Murderdolls, it's Joey Jordison's mom. It was the spring of 2002, and the two men were sitting at the kitchen table in Mrs Jordison's house in Des Moines, where Joey was still living despite his success in Slipknot.

The 26-year-old Wednesday had signed up to Murderdolls as their bassist. He was playing bars to a couple of hundred people back home in North Carolina with his own band, cross-dressing crypt-creepers Frankenstein Drag Queens From Planet 13. What did he have to lose by joining the drummer from Slipknot's glam-punk side-project?

Murderdolls were initially fronted by a friend of Joey's from Iowa named Dizzy Draztik, but Wednesday's guide vocals on the songs they'd recorded so far – which included a bunch of Frankenstein Drag Queens ones – had impressed his more famous bandmate. And, apparently, his more famous bandmate's mother, too.

"We were at his mom's table and Joey goes, 'I think I want Wednesday to be the singer of the band'," says Wednesday now. "His mom took a puff on her cigarette and went, 'I think he should be. He sounds better.' And Joey was just like, 'OK.' I'm thinking. 'Whoa, way to go, Mrs Jordison!'"

And so Wednesday found himself replacing the unfortunate Dizzy. Their debut album, *Beyond The Valley Of The Murderdolls*, was released a few months later, in August 2002. It was a glorious, gory explosion of blood-splattered punk rock, head-spinning hair metal and more B-movie horror references than you could shake a severed arm at. More importantly, it showed that behind the bloodied mask he wore in Slipknot, Joey Jordison was a man of multitudes, musically speaking.

"He sat behind the drums for years, but he was such a talented dude," says Wednesday. "He could play guitar, write amazing songs, he had an ear for a great chorus. I miss him."

Before he joined Murderdolls, Wednesday 13 wouldn't have been able to pick Joey Jordison out of a police line-up, masked or not. He knew who Slipknot were, of course – he'd seen them on the covers of the magazines he delivered as his day job, and had sold plenty of t-shirts with their photo on it in his *other* day job working at Hot Topic. But he'd never listened to them.

"They just weren't the sort of thing I listened to at home," he says.

The first time he caught a whiff of something happening was when he got a call from a guy who said his name was Dizzy Draztik. "I'm in a band called The Rejects with Tripp [Eisen, then Static-X guitarist] and Joey Jordison from Slipknot," Dizzy said. "We'd like you to play bass with us." Wednesday's first reaction was: "Play bass? I sing and play guitar in my band." But he thought about it for a second. "I realised this would be a lot cooler than delivering those fucking magazines."

> **"JOEY SAID, 'DO YOU LIKE SLIPKNOT?' I WENT, 'NOT REALLY'"**
> WEDNESDAY 13

And so it was that he found himself speaking to Joey Jordison himself. Wednesday remembers Joey's mum making dinner in the background while they spoke.

"I said, 'So you're in Slipknot? Now, which one are you?' And he goes, 'I'm the cool-looking one.' We just both started laughing and that was it."

They started talking about the music and movies they liked: Alice Cooper, Kiss, glam metal, *The Exorcist*, 1979 Steve Martin comedy *The Jerk*. Joey said he was a big fan of the Frankenstein Drag Queens From Planet 13.

"He genuinely loved the band," says Wednesday. "Then he goes, 'I've got three months off from Slipknot before we go

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back out. I'm gonna fly you over to Iowa, we're gonna jam, we wanna use some of these songs.'"

Not long after, Wednesday found himself on a plane en route to Des Moines to meet Joey face to face. The connection they'd had on that initial phone call wasn't a one-off. As they spent time in each other's company, they realised there was so much common ground beyond shared taste in music. Both came from working class families, both were driven by a desire not to have to get a 'proper' job, and both could quote freely from 1980 spoof disaster movie *Airplane!*.

It helped that Wednesday wasn't remotely intimidated by Joey's fame. Joey told him that one guy they'd tried out had turned up to the first rehearsal with a Sharpie and a Slipknot album for him to sign.

"Joey actually asked me, 'Do you like Slipknot?'" says Wednesday. "I said, 'Not really' and he just laughed. He loved it that I didn't care who he was. He wasn't like, 'I am Joey Jordison, you better do what I say.' He never had that type of attitude."

When Wednesday arrived in Des Moines, Joey and Dizzy were still calling themselves The Rejects (Tripp Eisen had bailed to focus on Static-X). It was under that name that they began working on a bunch of songs with Wednesday in a Des Moines studio.

"They already had some songs recorded, but they wanted to use some of my Frankenstein Drag Queens songs," says Wednesday, who stayed in Joey's sister's old bedroom whenever he made the trip. "I thought, 'Fuck it, I'm only playing them in these little bars in front of no one.'"

Among the FDQ songs that Joey picked were *Twist My Sister, Graverobbing USA, 197666* and *The Exorcist*-inspired glam banger *Love At First Fright*. They threw in a couple of old Rejects numbers as well, while Joey brought in a track that he'd originally written for Slipknot titled *People Hate Me*. Joey played drums and guitar, Wednesday played bass and a little guitar, and laid down guide vocals for Dizzy to follow.

"That was kind of weird, hearing someone else sing those songs I'd been singing for years, but I was like, [shrugs] 'OK, let's do it'," he says. "Then Joey went off to do his Slipknot thing and I went back to North Carolina."

Wednesday was back in Iowa a couple of months later to finish off the job. He'd used up all his vacation time on the first trip, so he faked a death in the family, telling his bosses that his grandad had died and he needed more time off to head west for the funeral (this was true: his grandad had died, it was just several years before and not in Iowa).

Except Joey was about to spring a surprise on his bandmate. Wednesday had assumed that the conversation that had taken place in Joey's mom's kitchen about him singing for the band had been idle chit-chat. It turned out that it wasn't.

"Four days before I was due to leave, Joey pulled me to one side and goes, 'I want you to be the singer'," says Wednesday. Joey told him they were going to re-record Dizzy Draztik's vocals. "I went, 'What about the stuff that Dizzy wrote?' He just said, 'Rewrite it.' So I rewrote Dizzy's lyrics in two days, and ended up recording the vocals in a day and a half. Then I flew back home and he went out on tour with Slipknot."

There was just one thing left to do.

"At this point, it's not The Rejects and it's not Frankenstein Drag Queens, so we decided to call it something else," says Wednesday. "And Murderdolls just suited us."

The first the world heard of Murderdolls was via the three-track *Right To Remain Violent* EP, released in the summer of 2002. *Beyond The Valley Of The Murderdolls* followed on August 20, 2002, beating the debut album from Corey Taylor's Stone Sour by a week.

For Wednesday 13, the days of playing bars while dressed like a decomposing cheerleader in Frankenstein Drag Queens were over – and he loved it. "I thought there was potential for what we were doing to be huge and there was potential for it to be a complete failure," he says. "But from where I was standing, I didn't give a shit either way."

Joey and Wednesday 13 were a dream team

Heading out on the road meant recruiting a band. Joey and Wednesday enlisted guitarist Acey Slade, bassist Eric Griffin and drummer Ben Graves. The Slipknot fans who turned up to see them on their first few US dates didn't know what to make of them.

"They had no idea who I was, or anybody else in the band," says Wednesday. "It was all 'Joey, Joey, Joey!' Some of them did not like us, and they let us know."

"JOEY GOT TO BE A DIFFERENT PERSON IN MURDERDOLLS"

WEDNESDAY 13

It was a different matter in the UK.

"It fucking blew up," says Wednesday. "I felt like I was in The Beatles. I suddenly had a bunch of fans that liked me: 'Who's this other guy? He's cool.'"

It was in the UK that Murderdolls scored their biggest hit with a cover of Billy Idol's 80s classic *White Wedding*, recorded as a bonus track for a special edition of the album. They even tried to get Billy Idol himself for the video, in which Murderdolls cause havoc on an *American Idol*-style reality TV show.

"His management went, [narkily] 'Real funny, Billy Idol… *American Idol*. No,'" says Wednesday. "I heard we offended him. They weren't gonna let us put the song out."

Except the single did come out and went Top 30 in the UK. Suddenly, this bunch of freaks found themselves on *Top Of The Pops* alongside Evanescence, Marilyn Manson, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and "somebody from The Spice Girls". There was just one little problem.

"My voice was shot," says Wednesday. "I was like, 'Can I just lip sync? Everybody else did it – Bowie, Alice Cooper, T-Rex. Come on!' And Joey went, [sternly] 'No, you're not lip-syncing, your voice will be fine.'"

Joey and Wednesday put Murderdolls on ice in 2004. The former returned to Slipknot for the *Vol.3: (The Subliminal Verses)* album, while the latter launched his solo career the following year with his debut album, *Transylvania 90210: Songs Of Death, Dying, And The Dead*.

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Murderdolls (left to right): Back row: Joey Jordison, Eric Griffin; front row: Acey Slade, Wednesday 13, Ben Graves, with friends

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

But the clamour among fans for more Murderdolls music never went away, and they reunited in 2010 for *Women And Children Last*, before reinterring it once more.

The two men drifted apart during the 2010s. They didn't speak for a time while Joey dealt with both health issues and personal demons, but they reconnected towards the end of the decade. There was talk about resurrecting Murderdolls for a third time.

"And then," says Wednesday, "like everybody else, I got the news."

The news was that, on July 26, 2021, Joey Jordison had died in his sleep. The obituaries and tributes naturally focused on everything he'd achieved during his time in Slipknot, though the smarter ones also acknowledged the genius of Murderdolls. Wednesday still thinks about the music they made together – and the music they never got to make.

"That's one of the things that sucks," says Wednesday. "Knowing that we couldn't do any more together. We'd been talking about it, I felt like it was gonna happen again."

There are a couple of Murderdolls songs that have never come out. One was a new version of the Frankenstein Drag Queens' ickily titled *Hit And Rape*.

"It was the name of a Japanese movie I saw about cops in Tokyo blowing the heads off rapists," protests Wednesday. "The label wouldn't put it out, which was probably smart."

The other was no less tasteless. Wednesday and Joey wanted to write their own version of the Sex Pistols' sneering, anti-monarchist rant *God Save The Queen*.

"Joey was, like, 'Let's do a song about Princess Diana!'" says Wednesday. "So we wrote a song called *Princess Died*. It was literally the story of what happened to her. The chorus was just: *'Princess died! Princess died!'* The UK office [of their label Roadrunner] said they wouldn't work the record if we did it."

Wednesday is set to mark the 21st anniversary of *Beyond The Valley Of The Murderdolls* on a solo tour this autumn. It'll be a joyous occasion, albeit a bittersweet one given his onetime partner in crime is no longer around to celebrate it with him.

"Joey didn't have to do Murderdolls," says Wednesday. "The guy was in Slipknot. But he got to get out from behind that drumkit, he got to play guitar, he got to take off his mask. He got to be a different person."

WEDNESDAY 13'S LATEST ALBUM, *HORRIFIER*, IS OUT NOW VIA NAPALM

LOONEY TUNES

Lovingly spoofing metal bands, and featuring voiceovers from the likes of Mark Hamill, James Hetfield and Corpsegrinder, *Metalocalypse* put our scene back on the screen

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

Back in the 1980s, metal was recognisable enough to be the subject of all manner of comic ribbing. *Spinal Tap* and *Bad News* lovingly spoofed the genre with a level of detail that metal fans appreciated, but were broad enough to appeal to people who would rather saw off their own ears than listen to Iron Maiden or Motörhead. At the turn of the decade we had *Bill & Ted*, while the 90s gave us *Wayne's World* and *Beavis And Butt-Head*. But as metal drifted further away from the centre of the cultural mainstream, representation of the scene – funny or otherwise – became scarce. Enter writer, comedian and metal fan Brendon Small, who would go on to co-create *Metalocalypse*, the cult animated show that put metal back on the map, TV-wise, in the 2000s.

"I was inspired by *Spinal Tap*, *Bad News* and *Beavis And Butt-Head*," Brendon tells *Hammer*. "But then it just felt like it changed. We didn't even see [MTV's] *Headbangers Ball* on television anymore, it was a worrying time. Guitars were getting less heavy and they even started taking solos away! Can you imagine?! I didn't know why that audience wasn't getting served anymore."

Brendon had graduated from Boston's Berklee College of Music in 1997 while also taking a series of comedy courses at the college's sister campus, Emerson. After feeling disconnected from the metal scene during his time at college, he came out of his self-imposed musical exile and discovered a whole new school of bands.

"I started going to gigs again, to see Arch Enemy and Cannibal Corpse," he says. "It was post-9/11 and it was a weird time. But I could just see that metal was getting heavier and heavier again. I had this idea to combine everything I loved."

As the New Wave Of American Heavy Metal came to prominence, the look and sound of classic, brutal metal was back in vogue, and, once again, ripe for parody. This led Brendon and co-creator Tommy Blacha to come up with *Metalocalypse*, a show centred around fictional death metal band Dethklok – a band who were like The Beatles, only "a thousand times more dangerous and a billion times more stupid".

> **"WE WERE LIKE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, INVADING YOUR HOME WITH BRUTAL MUSIC!"**
> BRENDON SMALL

"We had seen the humour of the old rock band on their last legs, so we knew we had to go the other way," says Brendon. "Make them just unbelievably popular, the seventh largest economy on the planet, make it so that entire countries could collapse if they don't release their new album."

The show premiered in August 2006 on Adult Swim, the grown-up spinoff of Cartoon Network. It soon became essential viewing for metal fans and musicians alike, putting metal back in the cultural mix in the 2000s.

"It was obvious that we loved metal and were celebrating it," says Brendon of the show's success. "You don't dive so deep into it if you don't love it. I think people could tell that it came from a place of pure adoration.

Dethklok (left to right): Nathan Explosion, Skwisgaar Skwigelf, Toki Wartooth, Pickles, William Murderface

"The amount of times I've been at a show and someone in a band has come up to me and said, 'I can't believe you got us so right!'" he continues. "The truth is none of the characters were based specifically on anyone. Apart from [vocalist] Nathan Explosion – he was the combination of Conan The Barbarian and [Cannibal Corpse frontman] George 'Corpsegrinder' Fisher."

The show's popularity led to a stream of real-life metal musicians and actors voicing characters on the show, something that Brendon remains proud of.

"There was a day when Corpsegrinder and Mark Hamill recorded at the same time," recalls Brendon. "The guy from Cannibal Corpse and Luke Skywalker! That was something."

Brendon himself played and created much of the music for Dethklok as he wanted to get brutal metal spot-on, a situation he describes as "terrifying". When he launched a real-life Dethklok tour in 2007, he enlisted a bunch of top-tier musicians to back him up, including ex-Steve Vai bassist Bryan Beller, former Frank Zappa/current Devin Townsend guitarist Mike Keneally, and, most impressively, Death/Strapping Young Lad/Testament drum legend Gene Hoglan.

"I had a great band," he nods. "We needed one to legitimise it. People loved it, because we were so brutal, but we were funny too, and I don't think they knew you could be both. Gene was incredible, he's one of the best drummers of all time, it was an honour."

It was during those dates that Brendon saw the fans *Metalocalypse* had first-hand.

"I'd go outside to look at the line before a show," he tells us. "You'd see people in Slayer shirts next to people in *South Park* shirts. That was our audience to a tee."

Dethklok released three studio albums of original material between 2007 and 2012. *Metalocalypse* itself was cancelled the following year, after four seasons and one special. Today, Brandon still isn't sure why it was canned.

"I didn't really know what was going on," Brendon says. "It's like when a girl just stops calling and you don't know if you've broken up or not. But listen, I'd ticked so much off my bucket list: I've worked with Mark Hamill, Malcolm McDowell; toured with Mastodon; had King Diamond, Dave Grohl, James Hetfield, Steve Vai on my show… I couldn't be bitter."

Except the story isn't over. *Metalocalypse* is being rebooted for another generation with the release of a new full-length movie, *Metalocalypse: Army Of The Doomstar* and a fourth Dethklok album, *Dethalbum IV*. According to Brendon, this brings the Dethklok story to an end.

"I've tied this particular knot up, but I do have other ideas," he says, intriguingly.

As for the legacy of *Metalocalypse*, it's a simple one in Brendon's mind.

"Not everyone has a cool brother or a cool neighbour that can turn them on to cool music," he says. "We were that gateway into heavy music for so many. Like Jehovah's Witnesses, invading your home with brutal music! If that's the legacy, I'm so grateful for it. We proved that audience that wasn't being served did exist. H

***METALOCALYPSE: ARMY OF THE DOOMSTAR* IS RELEASED ON DVD/BLU-RAY ON AUGUST 21. DETHKLOK'S *DETHALBUM IV* IS RELEASED ON AUGUST 22 VIA WATERTOWER MUSIC**

PRESS/WARNER BROS.

A handful of the Probot personnel (left to right): Wino, Eric Wagner, Nick Raskulinecz, Dave Grohl, Greg Anderson, Snake

Metal Guru

Lemmy, King Diamond, Cronos from Venom… and Dave Grohl? This is the story of Probot – the Foo Fighters mainmain's love letter to the 80s metal scene

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN

On July 3, 1983, 14-year-old Springfield, Virginia schoolboy Dave Grohl went to Washington DC for a free Rock Against Reagan festival headlined by Dead Kennedys. The gig would change his life.

"I had just discovered punk rock and here were some of the best punk bands in America playing on my doorstep," he recalled in 2009. 'When I showed up [Texan 'crossover' thrash/hardcore band] D.R.I. were onstage. I couldn't even believe [what I was seeing], so much so that afterwards I bought their 22-song 7" [debut EP] from their singer out of their van.

"That whole night… I've got chills just thinking about it. It was so unbelievably moving. It was like our own personal Altamont, our Woodstock. And that's when I said, "Fuck the world, I'm doing this."

Many years later, in the spring of 1999, Dave returned home to Virginia. He bought a house in Alexandria in which, with the help of his producer friend Adam Kasper, he built a recording studio. It was here that Foo Fighters would record their third album, *There Is Nothing Left To Lose*. Both the album, and its laid-back first single, *Learn To Fly*, would win Grammy Awards, rubber-stamping Foo Fighters' status as one of the world's best-known rock bands. But now Dave Grohl's inner metalhead was screaming to be heard.

Purely for fun, he began recording old-school metal riffs with Adam, later adding bass and drums. When he played

GETTY.

these instrumentals to his friend Matt Sweeney, former frontman of post-hardcore band Chavez, the pair started fantasising about which underground metal vocalists could sing on the tracks if they were to create the compilation album of their teenage dreams. In 2001, after hearing Dave enthuse about this idea, MTV News reported that, "inspired by Santana's [30 million-selling album] *Supernatural*" he was intent upon creating "the 'death metal' version of the multi-artist project", under the name Probot.

Dave Grohl: "The whole thing started in February of 2000. Foo Fighters had made *There Is Nothing Left to Lose* in 1999, which was a pretty mellow record for us. We went out and played a lot of those songs live. I would find myself listening to Sepultura's *Chaos A.D.* before going onstage, and then singing a song like *Learn To Fly*. Which I thought was kind of funny – like, 'What am I doing with my life, man?' When I was young, my favourite bands were fucking Bad Brains, Void, Minor Threat, MDC, D.R.I., Corrosion Of Conformity, Slayer, Trouble, Voivod, Venom, The Obsessed and Mercyful Fate, and here I am playing music that sounds like the fucking Eagles or something!"

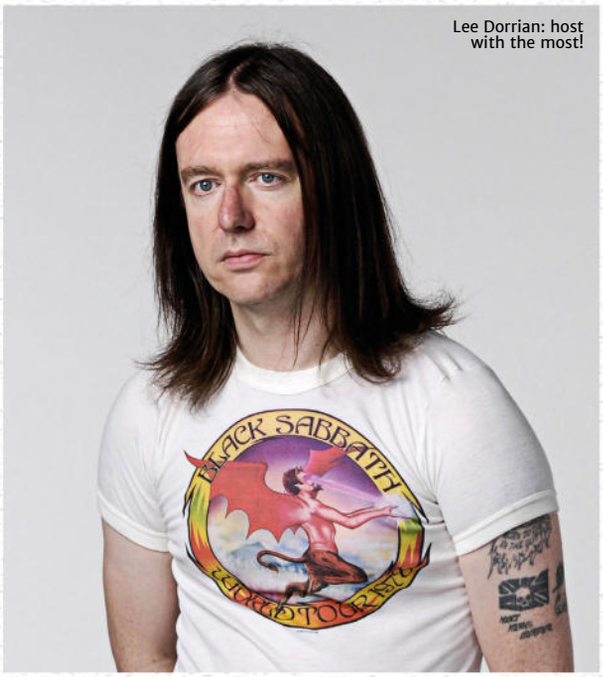
Matt Sweeney: "MTV really said Probot was influenced by Santana? Ha ha ha! I don't remember ever talking about Santana, but I like that, let's leave that in! We were hanging out a lot and Dave said, 'I have this idea about doing a record with all these amazing metal singers that were overlooked, particularly the 80s underground metal dudes', and I said, That's a great idea. And we came up a dream wish-list of who that might include, and Dave was like, 'OK, so this song could be for that singer…' He sorta had it all mapped out in his head, and it was wild watching him record the instrumentals. So yeah, we were totally trying to cash in, à la Santana, on the incredible demand for underground 80s metal vocalists, we figured we had to get in on that."

The list that Dave and Matt compiled for Probot read like a who's who of the 80s underground metal scene. It included Sepultura's Max Cavalera, Snake from Voivod, Cronos from Venom, former Napalm Death vocalist Lee Dorrian (then fronting Cathedral), King Diamond, Celtic Frost's Tom G. Warrior, D.R.I.'s Kurt Brecht, ex-Obsessed frontman Wino, and Lemmy from Motörhead, among others. Matt Sweeney was tasked with reaching out to each singer, explaining the concept of what Grohl was trying to do. One by one, the singers signed on.

Matt: "I gotta give almost all the credit here to Kevin Sharp from Brutal Truth, who's an old friend of mine, because he got me the numbers, and also he knew a lot of those guys, and knew the best way to approach them. Some of them knew Dave already, and if not, they'd heard of Nirvana or Foo Fighters, at least. But Dave was really nervous about talking to these guys, and was kinda shy about it, so I made the calls. That's when I found out that Cronos was an aerobics instructor, which was pretty funny to me at the time."

Cronos (Venom): "I was sent the raw music for pretty much all of the songs. There was quite a lot of them where I was like, 'I don't know what to do with this', because it was so not like what I'd done before. So when Dave said, 'Track three is yours', I was so relieved because that was the one I wanted: I was buzzing because that was my favourite one on there."

Lee Dorrian: "When Dave's old band, Scream, came back to England in '88 I put them on at a place called The Inn Hotel in Coventry. They had nowhere to stay and I had a council flat in Coventry, 52 Hillfields House, so they piled back to my flat. There were holes in the windows and doors made by some Dutch band who'd stayed the week before, and I had



Lee Dorrian: host with the most!

to go around to a squat around the corner to nick some furniture. But they were just happy to have a roof over their heads. And they were good company. Dave was a particularly witty character. He was really knowledgeable and excited about music, too. Napalm had just recorded a session for [Radio 1 DJ] John Peel and Dave really wanted to hear it, so I played it. It completely floored them, they thought it was nuts. Dave and I spent the rest of the night talking about Sabbath and Celtic Frost and Voivod."

Matt: "I remember King Diamond walking me through his plans for his vocals, doing the screams and laughs down the phone line. It was so thrilling, my hair was standing on end."

Dave: "Man, every time I hear King Diamond, I just think about the sheets of acid I was taking listening to [1987 solo album] *Abigail* and [Mercyful Fate's] *Don't Break the Oath*. A lot of time was spent screaming songs like *Corpse Without A Soul* with a fuckin' beer bong in my hand."

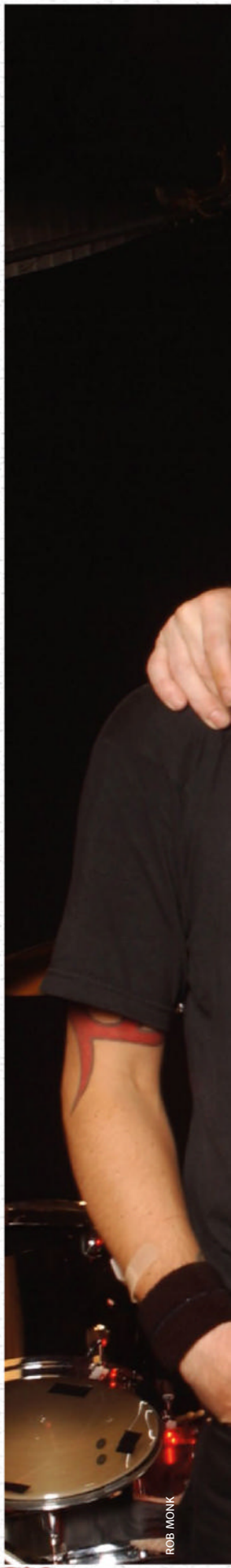
Matt: "It was so fucking cool talking to all these guys, and they really fucking delivered. Cronos sent us some bass overdubs, and we were freaking out. And he had three different lyric ideas…"

"I'D LISTEN TO SEPULTURA BEFORE GOING ONSTAGE WITH THE FOO FIGHTERS"

DAVE GROHL

Cronos: "One was like a sleazy, red light area, 'Going out for a whore' kinda song, another one was about young guys going out for a fight and drinking on the town, and then I also wrote *Centuries Of Sin*, which was the Venom-ous one. Dave went, 'I just want you to do your thing on it. Don't think about Dave Grohl, don't think about Foo Fighters and Nirvana, think as if you were doing a Venom song.' And I was like, 'Brilliant!'"

Matt: "The only people we couldn't get were Tom Araya from Slayer and Phil Anselmo. I remember Dave actually rented


ROB MONK

Dave Grohl, Lemmy and Wino: at first glance, an unlikely trio

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Cronos was happy to be given free rein on his track

Southern Lord, founded by Greg Anderson, was the perfect label to put out the album

a party bus for us to go see Slayer in LA with Pantera opening and we were backstage, and Tom Araya and Phil were right there, but we were too nervous to fuck with him."

The exact date on which the Probot album was considered finished is up for debate, but by 2003, Dave had 12 songs (including *I Am The Warlock*, with Jack Black on vocals, intended as a hidden track). All but Lemmy's contribution, *Shake Your Blood*, recorded in LA, were delivered by FedEx. Now he had to find a home for the record. Dave took meetings with a number of record labels, but was unimpressed. Finally Pete Stahl, the former frontman of Scream, suggested Southern Lord, the label founded by his Goatsnake colleague, Greg Anderson.

Greg Anderson: "I had started Goatsnake with Pete Stahl so I'd run into Dave now and again, and every time I'd see him we'd sequester ourselves in a corner and talk about metal. He was this giant pop star in my eyes, but all he wanted to know about was what cool metal records he should go out and buy, and I thought that was cool. Dave would mention to me that he was putting together these songs and he mentioned Lemmy and Cronos, so it was just kinda talk; he never, ever mentioned business to me. And then the way I heard the story from Pete Stahl was that one day Dave was playing Pete songs from it and saying, 'What the hell should I do with this stuff? I don't feel like a major label will understand,' and Pete said, 'Well, what about Anderson's label?' I laughed and thought nothing would come of it, but then Dave called me and said, 'Hey, I wanna talk about this Probot record…'"

Dave: "Major labels would have taken this record and slapped my name real big on a sticker on the front of the CD – 'Dave Grohl's fuckin' metal band.' And that would have ruined everything, because, to me, the focus should be on these vocalists. Some of the people at labels were asking who these singers are and why they should be on the record, and it was important that I give the album to someone who understood these people and this kind of music and who wouldn't take advantage of the easy sell."

"THE ONLY PEOPLE WE COULDN'T GET WERE TOM ARAYA AND PHIL ANSELMO"
MATT SWEENEY

Probot emerged on Southern Lord on February 10, 2004. It's a gnarly, nasty, and authentic collection, the work of men who know what it is like to taste blood, and to find themselves with puke on their shoes. In the hands of another superstar rock musician, it could have been viewed as a vanity project… and everybody hates a tourist. Instead, it's a celebration not just of true underground metal, but of the values that informed that community: the point of underground metal, and indeed thrash and hardcore punk, was that its tonality and totality was such that it discouraged the attentions of the poseur. *Probot*, the album, never begged for one's attention, and Probot, the collective, never played a gig, ensuring that, with its 20th anniversary just over the horizon, its purity remains intact.

Greg: 'I've been told by several people that Probot was their gateway to check out Wino's band, or Corrosion Of Conformity for the first time. It was like an introduction to this music, like, Dave recommends… We got a lot of attention for it, and the label profile as a whole was really elevated. Having that record in our catalogue was a great foot in the door for us."

Kurt Brecht (D.R.I.): "It was a fun idea to be a part of. I don't really know Dave Grohl, still, but it seems to me that Dave has got what every musician wants: freedom."

Dave: "I can't tell you how much it means to have the luxury of this opportunity. Not only of Probot, but all the opportunities that success allows me. It's important to extend yourself to other types of music, to other types of people. It's good for your fucking soul, for your fucking heart. It turned into something so beautiful that I'd hate to taint it by trying to do it again." MH

ADDITIONAL SOURCES: THIS IS A CALL BY PAUL BRANNIGAN, GUITAR WORLD, KERRANG!, REVOLVER. VENOM: GETTY. SUNN O))): PRESS/AL OVERDRIVE

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CONFESSIONS OF A CRABCORE BAND

Attack Attack! drummer and keyboard player Andrew Wetzel looks back on MySpace, haters and *that* video

WORDS: MATT MILLS

Attack Attack! circa 2008 (left to right): Andrew Whiting, John Holgado, Nick Barham, Caleb Shomo, Andrew Wetzel, Johnny Franck

PRESS.

When did you first hear about MySpace?
"The first time was in 2004 or '05. I was in middle school when MySpace started to take off. Before that, there was LiveJournal, and MySpace was this next iteration. But it also introduced a music component. 2006 was when it started to reach critical mass, so, by 2006, we were moving everything to MySpace. Early 2007 is when we really focused on delivering our demos and putting up remixes we'd done with our friends, and we noticed a huge amount of growth there."

MySpace affected your popularity pretty quickly, then?
"Definitely. A few months after we really started to focus on MySpace, we were getting contacted by people from the outside world about management and label services. Ultimately, that led us to Rise Records."

The video for your 2008 song *Stick Stickly* got a lot of attention. What do you remember about shooting it?
"It was September in Oregon, in the middle of a field! We were on tour at the time as well. It was a day off where we didn't get the chance to take a day off. That first tour was 13 weeks long, and one of the small handful of days off we had in those 13 weeks was spent freezing our asses off in a field."

A lot of people picked up on your 'crabcore' dancing in the video. Whose idea was that?
"It definitely came from within the band. Between Johnny [Franck, guitar/vocals], Andrew [Whiting, guitar] and John [Holgado, bass], really early on, there were a lot of discussions about how it would be cool to semi-choreograph ourselves during the parts that were super-rhythmic. This was happening across the scene: We Came As Romans did a similar thing. We loved it, we thought it was funny, and then there were articles in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. It was on Fox News!"

"WE LOVED CRABCORE. WE THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY"
ANDREW WETZEL

Just how powerful did the MySpace scene and its bands feel when things were at their peak?
"We were really close to being at the top of those MySpace bands. The first headline tour we did, in 2009, we sold pathetically few presale tickets: 10 or 12%. And then, when we did the shows, they'd sell out just from walk-ups. People just showed up! There were multiple instances of promoters being like, 'I'm about to lose everything on this show!', then having to turn away half of the capacity of the venue in walk-ups."

Stick Stickly: crabcore is great for strengthening the ol' thigh muscles...

PRESS. GETTY.

Attack Attack! on the Vans Warped Tour in California, June 25, 2010

Were there any downsides to being a 'MySpace band'?
"With anything that becomes trendy, there are people that refuse to be a part of it. They just hate it because it's different. Forums and boards like AbsolutePunk fucking hated us. The famous sign-off phrase that [the forum's users] used was 'van flip'. They literally hoped that our vans would flip over. That was the only downside but, in the grand scheme of things, it wasn't much of a downside."

Why did Attack Attack! split in 2013?
"What's that saying? The candle that burns twice as bright lasts half as long? I was probably home for a total of three months from the moment we got signed until [the breakup]. To say it was overwhelming and overstimulating for a bunch of kids is a drastic understatement. We were handed a lot of very adult problems that, honestly, a lot of adults wouldn't be prepared to handle, and that really wears on you."

Former Attack Attack! member Caleb Shomo went on to form Beartooth. Did you stay in touch?
"Not really. During the 'divorce', everyone picked their own thing and went their own way. Some of us stayed in touch, some of us didn't. That was just the way things went."

Attack Attack! reunited in 2020. Why?
"Whiting and I started the band in high school, and it was only a matter of time before our orbits crossed again. It just seemed like enough time had passed, to the point that all of the chaos and calamity that took place was in the rearview mirror. We were galvanised by the response to the EP [2021's *Long Time, No Sea*] and we saw that we can take just about any risk musically and get away with it. We have an unreleased EP that's being mixed right now, and our main goal is to create more and keep antagonising the music scene. Ha ha ha!"

Do you notice any similarities between MySpace and what TikTok is doing for artists today?
"Oh, 100%! TikTok is more controlled and structured than MySpace, because MySpace was the first of its kind, but I'm definitely seeing the same thing happening again. As a band, it's not really necessary for you to have a major record label deal or a ton of money. It's not necessary to have anything besides a great product and an engaging image."

ATTACK ATTACK!'S *DARK WAVES* EP IS OUT NOW VIA OXIDE RECORDS

THE HAMMER INTERVIEW

STEVE-O

He was the wildman of *Jackass* who drank goldfish, snorted wasabi and stapled his scrotum to his leg. Now 15 years sober, he's no less of a daredevil

WORDS: MATT MILLS

Before finding fame with MTV's OTT stunt show *Jackass*, Steve-O had already had some wild experiences. He'd lived in five countries, been arrested multiple times, and worked as a clown on a cruise ship. Then, as *Jackass* evolved from TV hit to worldwide movie franchise, he drank a goldfish and threw it back up. He snorted wasabi. He tightrope-walked over alligators with raw meat in his trousers.

Since the TV show ruled the world, from 2000-2007, Steve-O's started looking after himself a bit more. He quit drinking and drugs in 2008, before branching out into the less-taxing worlds of podcasting and YouTube. But he's still a fucking nutter. For his recent run of comedy shows under the banner The Bucket List Tour, he filmed himself jizzing while skydiving and getting anaesthetised on a bike. It may seem mindless but, as Steve-O explains to *Hammer*, it's all part of his philosophy of 'distraction therapy'. After all, whatever problem you're facing, it can't be worse than having some staples in your scrotum, right?

Serious partying: Steve-O, Jason 'Wee Man' Acuña and Chris Pontius at the *Jackass* movie premiere in Hollywood

Your recent UK tour was promoted as something of a homecoming, since you were born in London. What was your upbringing like?
"I was born in Wimbledon, then moved to Brazil when I was six months old. I spoke my first words in Portuguese. Then I moved to Caracas, Venezuela, when I was two years old and spoke Spanish there. I moved to the States when I was four years old, then back to London, then to Canada, and then I stayed in London through all of high school. Maybe you know the reason why I moved around so much: my father was a very successful corporate businessman."

Wasn't he one of the higher-ups at Pepsi?
"He was the president of Pepsi-Cola in all of Brazil. That's why we moved to Brazil. He then became a big tobacco CEO and became the president of [American cookie company] Nabisco International. My dad sold soda, which kills people; cigarettes, which kill people; and cookies, which kill people. Ha ha ha! My dad is a mass murderer! He got quite wealthy killing people, but he's also a genius. In 1990, years before the internet [became accessible to the public], I was 16 years old and my dad said I either had to get a summer job or go to secretary school and learn how to type. [He said] 'I predict that computers are going to become more prevalent in society.' I didn't want to work and went to secretary school."

How did moving around so much affect your childhood?
"I don't think you need to be Sigmund Freud to guess that the lack of attention and supervision from my parents, coupled with always being the new kid at school, made me a little bit of an attention whore."

Is that what made you want to go to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College?
"When I was a teenager, skateboarding brought me to the video camera. That's what happens: you wanna videotape all your tricks and try to get sponsored. I fell in love with the video camera and then, when I went to [regular] college, I could not bring myself to go to class. I failed and got kicked out of the dorms and – on my way out, knowing I wasn't that great at skateboarding – I decided I wanted to become this crazy, famous stuntman! I wanted to provide comic relief with outrageous stunts in professional skateboard videos."

"THEY LOCKED ME UP IN A PSYCHIATRIC WARD"

How did you go about getting famous?
"I got nowhere for three years. I was homeless for three years. Then I moved in with my sister and I was a fucking slob. I ate all her food, her house was a mess. She found out about this clown college and thought it'd be perfect for me. A viable way to get me the fuck out of her house! Ha ha ha!

"When she told me, what was fascinating about it was that there was no tuition [fee] if you could get in. That's how clown college worked. They wanted equal opportunity for people to run away with the circus. They didn't want some barrier for entry and it served as a tax write-off for the circus. I never had any interest in being a circus clown, but I thought it'd make me a bona fide, trained professional and people would take me more seriously."

And you graduated, right?
"Yeah! I did it to legitimise myself as a crazy stuntman."

***Jackass* began airing in 2000 and was a success pretty much instantly. Why do you think there was this appetite for seeing you guys do these dangerous things?**
"There's some primal thing in our DNA. We have such a survival instinct that we're programmed to be fascinated by threats to our survival. Just look at all the traffic that is created not by an accident in the road, but simply by people slowing down to get a good look at the carnage. There's this syndrome of rubbernecking. There's something in our DNA that compels us to be fascinated by carnage and failure.

"I think that the charm of *Jackass* is in us being able to not take ourselves too seriously. You can't be super-macho in *Jackass*, you have to embrace the fact that you look uncool. That ability to not take ourselves seriously and be OK in compromising situations, I think, is endearing. Lastly, I think there's something genuinely wholesome in that we invite all of the terrible things we go through but, when it comes to third parties, we're really respectful."

GETTY

Steve-O: clean, sober, and still raising hell

Did it still feel wholesome when you stapled your scrotum to your leg onstage?
"Ha ha! That was something I did for my own side-project, but absolutely! I'll explain why: the human experience is a real motherfucker. We have one instinct, which is to survive, but we've got one guarantee, which is that we won't survive. No matter how good your life is, it's gonna get awful – and that's assuming you have a great life! People have all kinds of problems and stresses, and I can assure you that, for someone with any one of these problems, in that moment when they're confronted with video footage of me stapling my ballsack to my leg, their problems are not an issue. I don't purport to solve anyone's problems, but I can make them go away temporarily. It's why I've dubbed my profession as 'distraction therapy'."

Where did the ballsack-stapling idea come from?
"It was when I was working as a clown on cruise ships [in 1999]. We had to write up weekly reports and I was the only clown that had typing skills [because of that summer spent in secretary school]. It was me and this other clown in the office, and he's just sitting there with idle hands and I'm typing away. [Out of boredom,] he grabs a stapler off the desk and then he opens it up and goes 'WHACK!' He whacks his arm with the stapler and, sure enough, he's got the staple in his arm. I'm just like, 'Dude! That was awesome!'"

But how did it escalate to ballsacks?!
"We got paid in cash every two weeks, and we made $625 per week. So we got more than $1,000 every two weeks. The very next payday, I asked this clown for permission to steal his idea and he was super-cool with it. I started a bit called The Thousand-Dollar Man, where I whacked staples into dollar bills across my arms and my chest. Then, when we were filming the *Jackass* series, I said, 'Let me staple some shit to my body.' That's when we stapled the letters of *Jackass* across my butt cheeks.

"When I started touring the next year, I had the females in the audience throw their bras and panties onstage so I could staple them to myself. I got drunk enough and had done enough cocaine one night where I thought, 'If I can use a staple gun, I'll staple my ballsack to my leg.'"

It was 2008 when you got sober, wasn't it?
"Yeah. March 10, 2008."

When did you realise the drinking and drugs really needed to stop?
"It was evident that I had a problem way before *Jackass*. When I was a clown in the circus, I was backstage peeling off my nose and snorting cocaine. I'd go through a whole weekend of shows and not sleep for, like, three days in a row. I had a problem with drugs and alcohol and I was perfectly resigned to just dying: living a life and dying a death of active drug addiction and alcoholism. I thought I was a lost cause, a write-off. It just so happened that [*Jackass* co-creator and fellow stunt performer] Johnny Knoxville and some of the people in our *Jackass* world staged an intervention. They locked me up in a psychiatric ward, and I was locked up long enough

PRESS

Jackass: The Movie stars Ryan Dunn, Johnny Knoxville, Steve-O and Bam Margera, thankfully not auditioning for Slipknot

"I EJACULATED AS I FELL OUT OF AN AEROPLANE"

and exposed to the right kind of message that I realised, 'Wow, I have to do something.' I've been sober ever since."

Have you ever filmed anything so insane that it couldn't be shown?
"Yeah, there's a good little bucket of 'too hot for *Jackass*' things that never saw the light of day. It's interesting, my Bucket List Tour is multimedia. When the doors open, people walk into the theatre and there's a screen, so I thought, 'Why not make a pre-show [reel]?' The pre-show starts with a video of what *Jackass* could not show."

What kind of stuff do you show?
"A lot of people know that [Johnny] Knoxville did the self-defence thing [in the *Jackass* pilot, he gets pepper-sprayed, tasered and shot with a stun gun]. A lot of people don't know that it ended with him shooting himself in the chest with a .38-calibre handgun to test out a bulletproof vest."

How did that go?
"The gun went fucking flying! He wanted someone else to shoot him but nobody would, because they thought they might kill him. So he shot himself holding the gun backwards, which he thought was even scarier. I think that the kickback of the gun flying so far took some heat off the bullet. There was another one, before *Jackass*, where Knoxville goes, 'Hi, I'm Johnny Knoxville, and I'm about to get hit by a car real soon.' Sure enough, a car comes tearing through the frame and takes him out!"

Didn't you also film some brand-new stunts for the tour?
"Yep! I'm going back to my roots and lashing out at social media's community guidelines, which I'm so fucking fed up with that I went, 'I'm gonna push it further than ever! This is stuff that couldn't even have happened for *Jackass*!'

"There's one [clip] with a medical professional in disguise, administering stolen anaesthesia drugs into my vein while I'm riding a bicycle. I loved that so much that I got another medical professional in disguise to put a four-inch needle into my spine and inject drugs into my spinal cavity, which rendered me paralysed while I was in a full sprint through a field. The closer of the show is called Skyjacking, which is where I ejaculate as I fall out of an aeroplane, butt naked, with another man strapped to my back."

What kind of person were you during the *Jackass* heyday?
"I was inhibited by my alcoholism and drug addiction. I used drugs and alcohol to soothe what was really a discomfort in my own skin. I would characterise the early *Jackass* stuff as me being palpably uncomfortable in my own skin and trying to mask that in any way I could. Over the course of time, and particularly in sobriety, I'm not masking anything. I've found my voice and my confidence."

How do you feel about yourself in 2023?
"I'll end on this: I'm profoundly grateful for my alcoholism and addiction issues, because addiction is the only disease where, when you treat it, you become a better version of yourself. Any other disease, the best you can hope for is to be as healthy as you were before. At the risk of sounding like a douchebag, I'm running circles around every younger version of myself, and that's great. I owe that to my recovery." MH

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EDITED BY: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURE: KATJA OGRIN

Skindred: sitting pretty in the ragga metal party stakes

SKINDRED

Smile

EARACHE

Ragga metal party animals bring more good times, and even more reggae

IT COULD BE argued that Skindred never needed to release an album again. The ragga metal ragamuffins are already heavy music's ultimate party band, able to ignite crowds at festivals from Bloodstock Open Air to Boomtown with their charisma and good-time singalongs. Even if the five-year gap between *Smile* and predecessor *Big Tings* was twice as long, thousands would doubtless still swarm around this band every summer to day-drink, dance and, of course, do the Newport Helicopter.

That Skindred persist with making new music is testament to how important they find the messages in their songs. According to singer Benji Webbe, "Skindred always write about unity and love" – emotions he felt while being raised in a multicultural Newport community, before his parents passed away tragically young. Since 2002 debut *Babylon*, the band have been encouraging that kind of acceptance in the wider world, and *Smile* proceeds with the same goal of unifying whoever's within earshot.

SMILE'S GOAL IS TO UNIFY WHOEVER'S WITHIN EARSHOT

During lead single *Set Fazers*, it's easy to imagine every festival-goer who isn't suffering from sunstroke or a monster hangover coming together in dance. Aside from its gleefully geeky *Star Trek* obsession, it's classic Skindred fare, where snarl-rapping vocals lead into a hulking nu metal chorus replete with glitching EDM. The song's preceded on the album by *Gimme That Boom*, which boasts a *'Boom! Boom! Boom!'* hook and a tongue-in-cheek command of *'Turn around, stupid!'*, both of which are more than capable of getting a jam-packed field singing and spinning given the chance.

Smile asks people to do more than simply move about and embrace one another, however. It also pushes fans of a heavy metal band to accept out-and-out dub and reggae

PRESS/DEAN CHALKLEY

jams. Quasi-title-track *L.O.V.E. (Smile Please)* is essentially Skindred's version of *Three Little Birds* from Bob Marley & The Wailers' classic 1977 album, *Exodus*. *'We want the right vibe, no negative vibe,'* Benji happily sings atop some gentle drumming. *'Everybody in the place, you know we are the same tribe.' Mama* similarly bypasses metal convention, replacing distortion with a clean guitar tone and swelling ska horns.

Heavy music still plays its part in *Smile*'s second half, though. *Addicted* pushes and pulls between dub and a big silly metal hook. Meanwhile, *Black Stars* follows the sound of steel drums with the heaviest downtuned-to-Hell Limp Bizkit riff that Wes Borland never played. The track also pushes Skindred into the brazen political lyricism they exhibited on 2011's *Union Black* album, tapping into reggae's long history as a potent form of protest, from Bob Marley through Peter Tosh to UB40 and The Specials. Here, *Black Stars* joins *Smile*'s crusade for togetherness in an anti-racist tirade: *'Where you think me come from, from a tree? Dragged on a slave ship, me never come here for free!'* Benji loudly barbs during one verse.

As a result, both lyrically and musically, there's a respectable bravery throughout *Smile*. Lesser bands would have settled into a party-hard gimmick and then coasted on it for life. However, this bunch have a vision for peace and love powerful enough to transcend the borders of metal.

FOR FANS OF: Zeroscape, Bob Marley & The Wailers, Limp Bizkit

MATT MILLS

ACID MAGUS
Hope Is Heavy
MONGREL

South African psychedelic fuzz monsters expand and uplift

Hailing from South Africa, this self-described "garage doom on shrooms" outfit have hit new heights on their second album. Heaving with introspective and confessional lyrics just as heavy as its fuzzed-up riffs, the LP is centred on their search to find light in these dark days. It's by turns more crushing and catchier than ever thanks to the addition of a second guitarist and a new singer who calls to mind Perry Farrell and Maynard James Keenan. The quintet might also have an underground hit on their hands with *Dead Weight*. Ruff Majik's Johni Holiday lends his charismatic croon to the tune, and the hard rock-minded number suggests the future is bright for these bruisers.

FOR FANS OF: Earthless, King Buffalo, Ruff Majik

EDWIN McFEE

AETHERIAN
At Storm's Edge
LIFEFORCE

Greek melodeath high-risers stay the course on album two

After the surprising success of their 2017 debut album, *The Untamed Wilderness*, Greece's Aetherian are on the radar of melodeath fans internationally, and expectations are high for its follow-up. *At Storm's Edge* meets them – mostly. Following a short intro, first track proper *Army Of Gaia* offers an Insomnium-style mid-pace with grandiose leads and low, bellowed vocals. The title track is a standout, lent urgency by the opening blastbeats before spreading its wings. Although strings are sprinkled throughout, *At Storm's Edge* relies mainly on stirring guitar and fist-pumping pacing, with only a couple of songs feeling like they drag. Otherwise, this is majestic, anthemic and well-executed melodeath.

FOR FANS OF: Insomnium, Dark Tranquillity, Amon Amarth

WILL MARSHALL

ASTRALBORNE
Across The Aeons
PROSTHETIC

Aspiring US trio aim for the melodeath stratosphere

Fans of melodic death metal rightly heralded the 2019 debut by Ohio's Astralborne, with its tasteful worship of the genre's hallmarks. Though their second effort brings little new to the template, *Across The Aeons*' sci-fi-themes will put the trio on the radar of anyone who applauds Iotunn's inter-galactic quest. Guitarist Derik Smith in particular flourishes on the galloping pageantry of *Gemini*, while the regal leads of In Flames' *December Flower* offer an explicit homage to the Gothenburg sound. *Star Of Extinction*'s dizzying dynamics pave their way to a gorgeous crescendo, with the epic grandeur, acoustic strumming and strings of the nine-minute title track evoking the pristine soundscapes conjured by the likes of Insomnium.

FOR FANS OF: Insomnium, Iotunn, In Flames

ADAM BRENNAN

Dymna Lotva: exiled but refusing to cut ties to their roots

DYMNA LOTVA

The Land Under The Black Wings: Blood

PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Belarusian post-black exiles offer an epic of loss and displacement

IN 2021, AFTER openly supporting protests against their country's president Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus's Dymna Lotva were forced to flee to Poland. It sets a heady backdrop to an ambitious, 13-track album that sees the band delving ever deeper into their vision of the post-black metal landscape.

Formed in 2015 by Katsiaryna 'Nokt Aeon' Mankevich (vocals, flutes) and Jauhien Charkasau (guitars, bass), Dymna Lotva have cultivated an extravagant sound, rooted in black metal, folk, prog and doom. *The Land...* charts an even broader stylistic course, gliding through realms of ethereal balladry on *Unquenchable* and *Ashes*, into *Dead Don't Hurt*'s crushing doom metal dirge and interspersed with moments of moody, jazz-inflected foraging as on *Night Witches*.

Tracks rarely push past mid-tempo, inexorably driven by churning, distorted riffs, spectral atmospherics and lofty melancholic chants. While black metal casts an enveloping shadow here, its foundational elements – blastbeats and blazing waves of speed picking – are all but absent. Instead, it's mainly influential, playing out in Nokt Aeon's piercing shrieks, which also serve as connective tissue between the myriad styles at play. With black metal as a springboard, Dymna Lotva's progressive outlook draws intosharp relief, emerging in a kaleidoscopic interplay between piano and strings and the sombre wail of the saxophone on *Hell* and *To Freedom*. *Till The End* is a howling, shape-shifting banshee that delivers the album's most overtly brutal statement, unleashing a barrage of merciless shredding that crests in a hellish frenzy.

Clocking in at nearly 75 minutes, *The Land...* is a long-haul voyage fuelled by chaos and unpredictability. Given its scale, it's hardly surprising that tracks begin to bleed together by the halfway point. But at its emotional centre is an undeniable sense of melancholy, loss and fury that delivers an authentically captivating experience.

FOR FANS OF: **Agalloch, Woods Of Ypres, Enslaved**

JOE DALY

AN AUTUMN FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN

Closure

PROSTHETIC

Shadowy Dutch tearjerkers try out some new sonic tricks

This mysterious Dutch entity continues to evolve into strange new shapes and sounds. For longtime fans of their faded and forlorn blackgaze swirl, there's enough misery onboard to keep you languishing in near-death ecstasy for days – from the Joy Division-meets-DSBM mood-ruiner *I See You... But Never Clearly* to the sickbed hallucination of *This Feels Like Dying*. But there are moments when the sound opens up to new possibilities. The title track wouldn't be out of place on an early Cure record, *For Tomorrow* sounds like Hüsker Dü getting bitten by an angry dog and closer *Here Comes Sorrow* actually rocks pretty hard. An album that captures all the shades of a setting sun.

FOR FANS OF: **Alcest, Deafheaven, Ghost Bath**

KEN McINTYRE

CADAVER

The Age Of The Offended

NUCLEAR BLAST

Weird brutality from Norway's pitiless pioneers

It's always useful to be reminded that extreme metal is supposed to be fucking horrible. *The Age Of The Offended* is a wild, wicked and deliriously snotty ride into Hell, as Cadaver build upon 2020's *Edder And Bile*, twisting their manic, maverick assault into grotesque new shapes and wrapping everything in acid-sodden bandages. The result is filthy and punishing, but also deeply psychedelic and proudly against the grain. *Postapocalyptic Grinding* and *The Sicker, The Better* send death metal spinning down a kaleidoscope full of jabbing knives and shattered teeth, while *The Shrink* and *Freezing Isolation* wring litres of abominable ooze from a mad-eyed mess of old-school ingredients. Even wilder than its artwork suggests, this is offensively good.

FOR FANS OF: **Possessed, Carcass, Bloodbath**

DOM LAWSON

CHAMBER

A Love To Kill For

PURE NOISE

US metalcore quintet take the comfortable route through chaos

This Nashville metalcore crew claim that the intent for their second album was to make everything faster, louder, more chaotic and more unpredictable than 2020's *Cost Of Sacrifice*. That should be applauded, but it's a shame they didn't focus on the unpredictable part a little more. *A Love To Kill For* is a serviceable metallic hardcore album, but one that clings rigidly to the tropes and formula of the subgenre without delivering any truly exceptional songs. It's only when you get to the penultimate title track that some melodic and electronic elements are utilised – a trope in itself at this point – to break things up. For metalcore completists only.

FOR FANS OF: **Knocked Loose, Kublai Khan, Jesus Piece**

STEPHEN HILL

PRESS/KATARZYNA MIKOLAJCZAK

CRYPTA
Shades Of Sorrow
NAPALM

Former Nervosa members whip up an old-school black/death assault

Last March, Crypta had just finished their support slot for Morbid Angel in Illinois when a tornado ripped through the venue. These ravenous Brazilians, however, command elemental forces of their own, and have been making a powerful impact on live audiences worldwide with their old-school savagery and dynamic interplay – despite debuting onstage barely two years ago. This follow-up to 2021's promising *Echoes Of The Soul* LP does everything a second record should: polishing the sound, diversifying the arrangements, advancing the melodies and maturing the performance while retaining the youthful vim. It's not all gold; Crypta's passionate but studied blend of death and black metal is far from novel, and a few fillers chase their tails to little effect, but there is much to relish here.

FOR FANS OF: Sodom, Cradle Of Filth, Sepultura

CHRIS CHANTLER

DEITUS
Irreversible
CANDLELIGHT

London-based black metallers threaten to destroy

With their third album, London's Deitus threaten to return danger to black metal, like so many have before them. The martially syncopated rumble of *Incursion* builds to a full-scale assault on the eight-and-a-half-minute *Straight For Your Throat*. Its driven charge of buzzsaw guitar and frenetic percussion deconstructs into a hypnotic slow burn for its second half. *A Scar For Serenity* explodes out the gate with melodic leads ducking and diving amid perma-frenzied rhythmic chop, before again slowing into ominous abstraction. It's a dynamic that repeats. The song's structures would benefit from keeping you guessing more as they alternate between lengthy frenzied and smouldering passages, but struggle to conjure the heretical atmospheres of their forbears. *Irreversible* is undeniably vehement in its delivery, and if it's delivered with the same passion live, Deitus still stand a chance of making good on their threats.

FOR FANS OF: Dissection, Shining (Swe), Watain

TOM O'BOYLE

THE DEVIL'S TRADE
Vidékek Vannak Idebenn
SEASON OF MIST

Hungary's dark folk magician extends his book of spells

On their latest release, the ambient folk collective – historically the one-man operation of Hungarian multi-instrumentalist Dávid Makó – seek to bridge the band's past with their future. In this case, that means introducing additional musicians into the mix. Whereas 2020's *The Call Of The Iron Peak* featured spectral vignettes consisting of one or two instruments, *Vidékek Vannak Idebenn* showcases a broader vision bolstered by drums and additional keyboards on some of the tracks. The sorrowful minimalism of songs like *Felkelék Én* and *Clear Like The Wind* sits alongside the dense, post-metal power of *Flashing Through The Lack Of Light* and *Új Hajnal Már Nem Jő*. It's an inspired move; the songs retain the coarse emotive urgency of the previous albums, while tapping into elemental forces that raise the cosmic vibrations to mesmerising new heights.

FOR FANS OF: Sólstafir, Naervaer, Fvnerals

JOE DALY

ELEINE
We Shall Remain
NAPALM

Dark symphonic Swedes find themselves in need of contrast

The fourth studio full-length from Swedish 'dark symphonic' metallers Eleine is heavier and more guitar-driven than the majority of their peers, but between the simplistic riffs and belchy growls, they've played it a little too safe. *We Shall Remain* has the bones of a good album with decent songwriting, but it lacks light and shade; the efforts of singer Madeleine Liljestam to add colour to her brilliant vocals are muddied by the metallic onslaught. While she has a talent for taking melody and cadence to unexpected places, there are many more moments when you wish for a note to really soar the way it does at the end of *Suffering*, or in the chorus of the album's title track. Of course, histrionics are a crucial, thrilling element in symphonic metal, but just as there are no real low points on this record, there are few real highs either.

FOR FANS OF: The Dark Element, Moonspell, Kamelot

CATHERINE MORRIS

Hanabie go all-out on the kaleidoscopic thrill of kawaii metal

HANABIE
Reborn Superstar!
SONY MUSIC

Kawaii metal's latest sensations double down on the cacophony

THE SURGE OF all-girl metal bands coming out of East and Southeast Asia in recent years has been thrilling to watch, and it clearly isn't stopping any time soon. Japan's Hanabie are such a band, and on second album *Reborn Superstar!* they delve further into exploring their 'Harajuku-core' sound.

Blending bouncy, hyperactive J-pop with the melody and brutality of late-2000s metalcore (think Enter Shikari fronted by Babymetal), they also bring a tongue-in-cheek kawaii image. But unlike their peers in Babymetal with their flawless choreography and uber-polished production, Hanabie are, endearingly, a little rougher around the edges. Founding member and guitarist Matsuri writes all of their songs, while singer Yukina can emit some truly impressive and disgusting (in the best way) screams, as on the thunderous *Neet Game* and single *Run Away*.

Amid the toy-like sound effects and the cartoonish squeals, there's a hell of a lot going on here, from the dizzyingly heavy guitar chugs on *Pardon Me, I Have To Go Now* to the synth-heavy *Be The GAL ~ Early Summer ver. ~* – at times reminiscent of Crossfaith, but more wackadoodle. It's not an understatement to say that the record can often border on downright cacophonous.

Despite that, the songs are always anchored in infectiously catchy melodies and infinitely mosh-able rhythms. *Warning!* swings violently between showcasing the quartet's youthful sweetness with a starkly contrasting harshness to great effect. It's one of the album's most enjoyable tracks, with a kitsch spoken-word section in the middle and an irresistible refrain of *'Warning! Warning! Warning!'*.

Hanabie have got ambition and talent in spades, and it shows on *Reborn Superstar!* – a multifaceted and massive record that deserves to make them an international sensation.

FOR FANS OF: Crossfaith, Babymetal, Enter Shikari

CATHERINE MORRIS

PRESS

Wolfgang Van Halen refuses to stand in anyone's shadow

MAMMOTH WVH

Mammoth II

BMG

Guitar prodigy Wolfgang Van Halen uncovers his own star power

DESCENDING FROM ROCK royalty can be a blessing and a curse – something Wolfgang Van Halen is well aware of. The son of the late, great guitar icon, Eddie Van Halen, Wolfgang joined Van Halen as bassist when he was just 15, has played with Tremonti, received a Grammy nomination in 2021 and had a custom guitar named after him by his father. But on the flipside, success has come with an unreasonable level of scrutiny. Online commentators have questioned his every move, dismissively chalking it up to his famous parentage.

Wolfgang's solo project, Mammoth WVH, has been a chance for him to establish his own sound and identity, acknowledging his place in his father's legacy, but refusing to indulge it. On his eponymous 2021 debut album, echoes of Van Halen's flash and dazzle were teased but deliberately kept to a minimum. Instead, the music landed somewhere between the heartfelt, palatable arena rock of Foo Fighters and Alter Bridge, with Wolfgang writing and playing all the instruments himself.

Mammoth II picks up where its predecessor left off, although, having already laid the groundwork for his sound, this time he's had the confidence to tweak and embellish. As a result, this is a looser, heavier and more expansive record. Single *Like A Pastime* pulls subtly from his metal influences, Tool and Meshuggah, adding a skittering, prog-tinged polyrhythm over a shimmering, anthemic chorus. Seven-minute alt rock epic *Take A Bow* centres around a glittering solo. It's a real rock star moment that Wolfgang shied away from on the debut album, but which he delivers with gusto here. It's the sound of a musician truly coming into his own – a sentiment cemented by the lyrics of triumphant closer *Better Than You*: *'Say what you'll say / Shallow and hollow / It will be better tomorrow'*. *Mammoth II* is the moment Wolfgang Van Halen has finally turned his back on his critics.

FOR FANS OF: Van Halen, Foo Fighters, Alter Bridge

DANNII LEIVERS

END REIGN

The Way Of All Flesh Is Decay

RELAPSE

Hardcore royalty get their melodic death groove on

Featuring ex-members of Bloodlet, Integrity and All Out War, you'd expect End Reign's debut LP to be full of stompy, beefy hardcore. And while they can't help themselves from slamming into a big fuck-off beat-down now and again, *The Way Of All Flesh Is Decay* has far more in common with classic, warp-speed melodic death metal than meat'n'potatoes hardcore. The riffs are savage, the solos blistering, the drums manic, but it's former All Out War man Mike Score who steals the show with his John Tardy-meets-Peter Tägtgren glass-gargling growl. The end result is a very surprising, and very super, supergroup.

FOR FANS OF: Hypocrisy, Heaven Shall Burn, At The Gates

STEPHEN HILL

FROM ASHES TO NEW

Blackout

BETTER NOISE MUSIC

US rap-infused rockers run riot with an apocalyptic prequel

With frontman Matt Brandyberry now the sole remaining original member from their 2013 formation, From Ashes To New continue to blend riffs, hip hop and electronic elements. *Blackout* is intended as a conceptual prequel to the apocalyptic 2016 debut, *Day One*, understandably picking up the pace in its second half. Heavy on production and passion, *Dead To Me* is shamelessly hooky with rap woven throughout and a satisfying breakdown in the middle. Other standouts include well-chosen single *Armageddon*, the equally radio-friendly, euphoric belter *Echoes*, and *Monster In Me*, which takes in strong Eminem influences and a repetitive headbanging chorus that the pit will enjoy.

FOR FANS OF: Linkin Park, Hollywood Undead, Hands Like Houses

NIK YOUNG

THE GORGE

Mechanical Fiction

PELAGIC

Musicality and mayhem from the jazz/black metal borderlands

All the members of this St. Louis-based prog-metal behemoth are professional jazz/session musicians or music teachers by day. *Mechanical Fiction* sees the quartet playing on the heavy side of life in opposition to the gentility of their day jobs and other creative endeavours. The album hosts insightful melodic richness in *Remnants Of Grief* and *Beneath The Crust*, and sinister, complex angularity in *Synapse Misfire* and *Earthly Decay*, all beyond the extreme music pale. These work in conjunction with some out-of-bounds rhythmic patterning on *Presence*, which possesses a ridiculously jazzy shuffle yet avoids detrimental self-indulgence and flash. If anything, the wonder is just how much *Mechanical Fiction* could have blown the ramparts off.

FOR FANS OF: Mastodon, Botch, The Ocean

KEVIN STEWART-PANKO

PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN

KATAKLYSM
Goliath
NUCLEAR BLAST

Canada's melodic death institution rally against oppression

Kataklysm have turned out 14 albums of reliable melodeath, and their latest is as towering as its subject matter. *Dark Wings Of Deception* is a strident opener, double kick drums and winding guitar pummelling eardrums before hitting breakneck pace with Maurizio Iacono's bark. *Die As A King* and *Bringer Of Vengeance* are hook-laden takes on modern DM full of blast-beats and punk-stained defiance. Aggressive and contemptuous of division and dysfunction, *Goliath* is also everything you could want and expect from a Kataklysm record, marrying thrash, punk and melodeath into a lean, muscular whole.

FOR FANS OF: At The Gates, Insomnium, The Black Dahlia Murder

WILL MARSHALL

MIZMOR
Prosaic
PROFOUND LORE

US black metal's cult miserablist gets comfortably numb

The brainchild of one-man misery-maelstrom A.L.N. (aka Liam Neighbors), Mizmor has attracted many admirers to its irascible buffets of black metal, sludge and doom. Sadly, the prophetically dubbed *Prosaic* extends these amalgams into the realms of anaesthesia, as characterless distortion-drenched drudges and tremolo-picked bursts trade off across four largely interchangeable cuts. While 2016's *Yodh* and 2019's *Cairn* were often brutal, gruelling affairs, unrelenting in their depictions of lethargy and loneliness, this outing feels limp and lifeless, like mud-wrestling with a corpse. A.L.N.'s vocals remain convincing expressions of existential torment, but how *Prosaic* cries out for the thoughtful abstraction of *Dialetheia*, his haunting collaboration with ex-Sorceress bassist Andrew Black, or *Pareidolia*, the hypnogogic closing cut from Mizmor's risk-taking 2022 EP, *Wit's End*.

FOR FANS OF: Bell Witch, Thou, Body Void

SPENCER GRADY

THE NIGHT ETERNAL
Fatale
VÁN

The goth/classic metal coupling produces another lovechild

The equitable bonding of goth rock and heavy metal arguably began to fully take effect on the final album by much-missed Swedish trailblazers In Solitude in 2013, subsequently honed to a fine art by Portland nostalgists Unto Others. Leave it to Germany to produce this blessed union's most full-throttle 80s throwback lovechild, this enigmatic Essen quintet's second album turning up with the sturdiest guitars, the snappiest pace and the highest HM quotient. The time-warp element is pushed to the max by occasional explosive fills that may induce nightmare flashbacks to those hexagonal drum pads that sounded futuristic in 1981. Crucially though, infectious and accessible songwriting is the band's trump card – aided to glory by Ricardo Baum's eccentric, expressive, elastic vocals. *Fatale* generates an irresistible string of moody headbangers and nocturnal anthems that flirt with gloom but result in effervescence.

FOR FANS OF: In Solitude, Unto Others, Danzig

CHRIS CHANTLER

NUCLEAR POWER TRIO
Wet Ass Plutonium
METAL BLADE

Instrumental tech metallers add synthwave to their silliness

Nuclear Power Trio's pun-filled 2020 EP, *A Clear And Present Rager*, was a sign that they weren't taking their djent anthemia *too* seriously. This follow-up is another quip, riffing somewhat distastefully off the title of Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's single *WAP*, but the album is more fun and proficient than its title suggests. Written after spending some time in Miami's synthwave clubs, the Denver trio have allowed futurism and neon lights to spill into the music, creating a nostalgic, party atmosphere. The terrible puns – *Apocalypse Mao*, *Snark Side Of The Un* – remain, but horns and grooves abound on *Nyetflix And Chill*, while elastic, syncopated rhythms and 80s synth nostalgia collide on *Air Force Fun*. Elsewhere, sporadic, gleaming solos from In Flames' Chris Broderick and Scar Symmetry's Ben Ellis complete a seemingly random, but consistently entertaining, release.

FOR FANS OF: Polyphia, Intervals, Periphery

DANNII LEIVERS

SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

BAITED
Cutting Teeth
SELF-RELEASED

The deliberately messy, raw hardcore punk energy and strong songwriting from this Charlottestown band is hard to ignore. If you're not yelling along to *Molotov* or falling for the old-school charm of *Fugue State*, check your pulse.

NIK YOUNG

BLACK SPELL
Walpurgis Night
HELTER SKELTER / REGAIN

These prolific psych/doomsters have plenty of tricks up their sleeve with their wah wah pedal-bashing, organ-spiced latest EP. Conjuring up images of 70s-era Hammer Horror, it's a diabolically good romp.

EDWIN McFEE

BLESSED BLACK
Seasons Vol.1
SELF-RELEASED

Set up by War Curse's guitar player as a classic-sounding stoner/doom outfit, Blessed Black are far more interesting, venturing into The Sword-like 70s prog territories on the first in a planned series of three-track EPs.

OLIVIER BADIN

HERUVIM
Battle For Cimmeria
REDEFINING DARKNESS

With proceeds going to their homeland Ukraine's war effort, Heruvim's four-tracker combines pristinely calibrated death metal with abyssal, reverb-drenched vocals and a very apt nod to Bolt Thrower to colossal effect.

JONATHAN SELZER

INHUMAN CONDITION
Panic Prayer
LISTENABLE INSANITY

Massacre alumni try out some new ideas on this EP; *Final Credits* brings a more atmospheric touch to their old-school death metal, while Blue Öyster Cult's *Godzilla* is convincingly transformed into an Obituary-esque stomper.

KEZ WHELAN

VALLETTA
Come Alive
SELF-RELEASED

A potent mix of Celtic Frost, Satyricon and The Bronx, this is fantastically catchy, bleak, old-school extreme metal with rock'n'roll hooks. It's impressive for a first effort, and Valletta are a name to keep a close eye on.

STEPHEN HILL

Mutoid Man pitch up on the progressive/ aggressive borderlands

MUTOID MAN
Mutants
SARGENT HOUSE

Cave In, Converge and High On Fire adventurers sink their hooks

CONSIDERING MUTOID MAN crammed two full-lengths, an EP and a relentless touring schedule while members juggled other bands and projects into their first five years of existence, the six years since 2017's *War Moans* has seemed much longer. Indeed, there was the little matter of acclimating a new bassist – High On Fire's Jeff Matz joins guitarist/vocalist Cave In's Stephen Brodsky and Converge drummer Ben Koller – to the band's fiery mélange of punk energy, math metal intricacy and prodigious prog wired around a dynamic spectrum of jittery hellazapoppin' hardcore, thunderous tribal twang and sewage sludge rumbling.

It would seem that time off – whether due to scheduling, the pandemic or Ben's elbow-smashing freak accident in 2018, or not – did Mutoid Man a lot of good. A frightening prospect for a band that have fired on all cylinders since day one.

Call Of The Void is both the album's opener and a display of the tricks in the Mutoid Man tool kit. Not only is everything from wiry trigonometric thrash and immaculately phrased vocal lines to brown note low-end doom and *'Whoa, whoa'* backing vocals (think early Bad Religion) present and exceptionally accounted for, but the songwriting arc and arrangement is as tight as Ben Koller's peppy pocket playing. Elsewhere, inexplicably infectious choruses abound on the progressive majesty of *Setting Sun*, amid the fret-wandering, limb-flailing metallic hardcore of *Frozen Hearts* and *Graveyard Love*'s trading of rumbling, catchy bass-heavy progressions with riffs that throw sunshine on Botch's 'evil math rock' hammer-on/pull-off fluidity.

Mutants perfects the balance between technicality and bore-into-brain hooks. The energy is bristling and unparalleled, the songs are unfettered earworms, and it's an album that will be sitting atop 'best of' lists come year's end.

FOR FANS OF: Torche, Converge, The Atomic Bitchwax

KEVIN STEWART-PANKO

OUTER HEAVEN
Infinite Psychic Depths
RELAPSE

Pennsylvanian death metallers flex a host of new muscles

These US death metallers' second album is a much more intricate, labyrinthine beast than their relatively straightforward 2018 debut. Amid the big, dumb, pit-ready riffs, there are some more technical and atmospheric flourishes. *Unspeakable Aura*'s frantic Cannibal Corpse-isms build to an unexpectedly psychedelic peak, while warped leads pepper the dizzying *Rotting Stone / D.M.T.*. New bassist Derrick Vella of Tomb Mold makes his presence felt on tracks like *Fragmented Suspension*, as nimble rhythms slither beneath the gristly riffs. Throw in guest spots from Pig Destroyer's J.R. Hayes and Morbid Angel's Steve Tucker, and you have an album that outshines their debut in every way.

FOR FANS OF: Tomb Mold, Undeath, Frozen Soul

KEZ WHELAN

OXBOW
Love's Holiday
IPECAC RECORDINGS

San Francisco's confrontational cult rockers find their soft spot

For a band so physical and so *carnal*, the notion of 'love' isn't one that immediately springs to mind when it comes to avant-rock titans Oxbow. But while their latest might be an album of love songs, there's still plenty of pain, ugliness and sweaty discomfort to chafe against the flickering moments of joy. *Love's Holiday* is marked by directness and a stripping back of knotty contortions, while the intuitive interplay is cushioned by woodwind, strings, a 15-piece choir and, on *Lovely Murk*, the voice of Kristin Hayter. Amid the lush orchestral poppiness, frontman Eugene Robinson keeps things grounded with his ever-compelling croons, wails and mutters. File under hurt Bacharach?

FOR FANS OF: The Birthday Party, End Result, Buñuel

ALEX DELLER

PANZERCHRIST
Last Of A Kind
EMANZIPATION PRODUCTIONS

Dutch death/black diehards return ready for another war

The perfect vehicle for tales of bloody conflict, blackened death metal is the myopic zealot's subgenre of choice. Panzerchrist have been knocking around for 30 years now, and their modus operandi remains largely unchanged since their 1996 debut, *Six Seconds Kill*. Their first album in a decade, *Last Of A Kind* is better produced and more elegantly crafted than its predecessors, but it still sounds like a swarm of giant, steel-plated Satanic wasps, hellbent on grinding skulls to dust. The title track is particularly vicious. It's eight minutes of white-knuckle blasting, ghoulish detours and deadly threats, and it confirms that new vocalist Sonja Rosenlund Ahl is, in the nicest possible way, an absolute beast. Meanwhile, *Baptized In Piss* is a necro-banger for the ages.

FOR FANS OF: Marduk, Belphegor, God Dethroned

DOM LAWSON

PRESS

RADIANT KNIFE
Pressure
SELF-RELEASED

Progressive sludge duo wade into choppy but well-charted waters

After honing their sound on a series of experimental EPs, this South Louisiana sludge duo now sound more assured than ever, coming across like a blend of all your favourite early 00s Hydra Head bands. They've got the angular, progressive riffing of Keelhaul, but also the soaring melodicism you'd expect from a Torche record. There's a spacey flavour to some of these songs too, largely thanks to guitarist/vocalist Stephen Sheppert's subtle synth embellishments on tracks like the Baroness-esque *Phil Collins Was Right* or proggy eight-minute closer *Demon Legs*. *Pressure*'s main focus, however, is firmly on the awesome power of the riff, with *Mortals* and *His Capa Was Detated* both dishing out wonky, weirdly timed sludge belters in a very Melvins-esqe manner. Radiant Knife may not be as revolutionary as their influences, but this is solid stuff.

FOR FANS OF: Mastodon, Keelhaul, Slomatics

KEZ WHELAN

ROYAL DECEIT
III
PRIME COLLECTIVE

Danish four-piece rev up along the modern metal spectrum

Royal Deceit's latest album comes with an impressive opening title track that will have you nodding your head immediately. Complete with upbeat drumming, an earworm of a chorus and melodic backing vocals, it's a cheery start, with *War Inside* following suit. They throw some grit into the mix with *Let Me Burn*, which flirts with deathcore vocals courtesy of a cameo from Hanging The Nihilist's Alexander Hall Kristensen, while *This Hell* and *Wolves* are awash with throat-shredding roars and volatile rhythms, showing that these Danes can bare their teeth. Royal Deceit delve into metalcore, nu metal and post-hardcore territories in equal measure, channelling influences from Letlive to Killswitch Engage. Granted, the tried-and-tested heavy verse/melodic chorus structure gets predictable at times, despite some aching clean vocals, but this is a confident and accessible album.

FOR FANS OF: Killswitch Engage, Letlive, Ghost Iris

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

SAUL
This Is It... The End Of Everything
SPINEFARM

US Melodic metallers prove anaesthetised to Armageddon

With its apocalyptic title, Saul's second album initially presents itself as vigorously bold. *This Is It... The End Of Everything* sets out to critique technological and societal disconnection, but musically feels divorced from its strong mission statement. Rather than pushing sonic boundaries, the Iowa alt metallers are playing it rather safe. While there's a compelling spark of tech-y experimentation, the Saul formula lacks a key ingredient: urgency. Any glimmer of grit is quickly snuffed out, the raw injection of growls or sharp distortion mellowing out into a hard rock sound. Rumbling soundscapes repeatedly blur into one, as tracks linger in the same sets of vocals, dynamics and sonic textures. If Saul are soundtracking Armageddon, they don't sound overly concerned, rehashing well-trodden ground with less conviction than those who came before them.

FOR FANS OF: Disturbed, Godsmack, Breaking Benjamin

EMILY SWINGLE

SIGNS OF THE SWARM
Amongst The Low & Empty
CENTURY MEDIA

Pittsburgh deathcore heavies pile on the barbells

With the aid of Lorna Shore and Tallah producer Josh Schroeder, Signs Of The Swarm's fifth album sees the Pittsburgh quartet at their heaviest yet. David Simonich's guttural vocals on *Pray For Death* and *Borrowed Time* have the power to contort your expression like you've been hit with a dose of gamma rays. By the time *The Witch Beckons* rolls around with a Matt Heafy guest spot, the whiplash from the constant headbanging is starting to set in, and yet the fast tempo proves utterly infectious. Each breakdown is bestial in its own right, yet falls naturally in the album's flow. *Shackles Like Talons* does lose some of the album's momentum, but *Amongst The Low & Empty* commands attention throughout its onslaught of brutality.

FOR FANS OF: Shadow Of Intent, Lorna Shore, Chelsea Grin

CHERI FAULKNER

Saint Agnes's rage is more than skin deep

SAINT AGNES
Bloodsuckers
SPINEFARM

East London antagonists lob a barrage of grief-fuelled sonic grenades

AFTER THEIR 2019 debut, *Welcome To Silvertown*, marked them out as a band to watch, London quartet Saint Agnes's profile has risen considerably in the intervening years. After self-releasing a DIY rock album, they're now following it up on the higher profile Spinefarm Records, and the attention they grabbed during their excellent Main Stage slot at 2021's Download Pilot means there are going to be plenty of new eyes on and a different weight of expectation on *Bloodsuckers*. The good news is that Saint Agnes have done what you would want of any band in this situation, by bettering their debut in every conceivable metric.

The first thing you'll notice is just how much better the band sound. The fat, weighty production from Nine Inch Nails collaborator Sean Beavan makes these songs bounce and pop in all the right places. Saint Agnes have a far better grasp of their own songwriting chops this time around. Where *Welcome...* had a few riffs and hooks that stood out, here everything feels more cohesive and consistent. The band's slinky, electro-metal grooves are far from groundbreaking, but when you can pen the kind of chorus that clasps itself onto your brain like a Pitbull with lockjaw, such as the one on *Follow You*, kick off a firecracker vocal bout with Mimi Barks on *Body Bag* or create the danceable Garbage-ricocheting-off-Korn of *I Mean Nothing to You*, originality can take a back seat.

The star here, however, is unquestionably vocalist Kitty A. Austen, who sounds like the result of the genetic splicing of AFI's Davey Havok and Garbage's Shirley Manson. The album was written and recorded in the aftermath of her mother's passing, and the exploration of grief, trauma and her own mental health here gives an essential emotional dimension to a style of music that is all too often about surface-level rage. Expect *Bloodsuckers* to connect Saint Agnes to even more people this time around.

FOR FANS OF: PJ Harvey, Nine Inch Nails, Ho9909

STEPHEN HILL

PRESS/SCOTT CHALMERS

Sevendust ponder the pros and cons of advancing their sound

SEVENDUST
Truth Killer
NAPALM

Atlanta's arena rock behemoths step back from the brink

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON for bands to be more beloved in their mother country than in other parts of the world, and Sevendust are a classic example. The radio rock heavyweights from Atlanta aren't an unknown quantity outside of the States by any means, but the reverence they receive on their home soil outstrips their appeal elsewhere by a fair margin.

As the new decade approached, their studio releases had started to feel like a band on cruise control: ensure a couple of tracks are solid enough for the airwaves and then hash everything else together. However, their 13th album, 2020's *Blood & Stone*, felt as though they had turned a corner. The songs were decidedly meaner, the delivery spite-filled and vitriolic. It seemed to be a case of 'new decade, new Sevendust'.

If *Truth Killer* is going to reaffirm that notion, it all starts rather inconspicuously. *I Might Let The Devil Win* borders on pop, driven by piano and restrained drums as vocalist Lajon Witherspoon croons softly, before shifting gear in the second half as the full band enters. How *Won't Stop The Bleeding* wasn't picked as a single when it's an arena-sized anthem-in-waiting, thanks to the crunch on the guitars and the soaring chorus, is anyone's guess. That honour went to *Everything* – which is in the same vein but not quite as impactful – and nu metal-tinged closer, *Fence*.

It's not all golden, however. *Superficial Drug* sounds like it was left on the Linkin Park cutting room floor around 2007's *Minutes To Midnight* sessions, and *Sick Mouth* is reminiscent of the apathetic approach to songwriting the band were exhibiting in the previous decade. The aggression of the penultimate track, *Love And Hate*, injects more energy for the album's final moments that *Fence* capitalises on, but given *Truth Killer*'s hope-raising predecessor, the whole thing feels rather like a step back.

FOR FANS OF: Shinedown, Alter Bridge, Seether

ELLIOT LEAVER

SILVERBURN
Self Induced Transcendental Annihilation
SELF-RELEASED

Former Taint and Hark linchpin becomes a one-man wrecking crew

A deviation from the stoner/sludge jams of previous bands Taint and Hark, this solo project from James 'Jimbob' Isaac is a tribute to the frenetic, acerbic mathcore kings of the early 00s. Underlining his multi-instrumental skills, it's Jimbob's aptitude for wrecking-ball riffs, most notably closing out *The Unrelenting Will Of Boundless Immortality* and *Bathe In Fire*, that gives the music its muscle. Though lacking the acerbic edge of the album's chief influences, there's still enough disjointed dissonance and unsettling turmoil on *Pain Body (Torn From Auric Field)* and *Simulacreality* to perplex and thrill.

FOR FANS OF: The Dillinger Escape Plan, Converge, Mastodon

ADAM BRENNAN

SOMNURI
Desiderium
MNRK HEAVY

New York sludge warriors go for more than a gut punch

Somnuri specialise in Crowbar-esque slo-mo sonic torture, but here they occasionally stretch their black leathery wings. They show a surprising amount of restraint on *Paramnesia*, *Hollow Visions*, and the title track; they're all powerful, riff-hammering grunge rockers with clean vocals and earworm hooks that come on like a sludgy Alice in Chains. The epic *Death Is A Beginning* slithers between this approach and a battering, bottom-heavy doom metal sound. Mostly, however, it's a repeated fist to the guts, steeped in their characteristically abrasive, slow-crawling sludge metal. Suitably oppressive but surprisingly versatile, *Desiderium* proves disgusting and gorgeous in equal measure.

FOR FANS OF: Mastodon, Yob, Crowbar

KEN McINTYRE

THE SUN'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE NIGHT
Worldless
CHURCH ROAD

Shadowy solo black metaller finds new strength in numbers

Following several underground releases, *Worldless* is not only this mysterious black metal outfit's first album for Church Road, but their first as a fully fledged band. Whereas TSJTTN's early records were entirely written and performed by mainman No One, the band he assembled for live performances had a much more involved role in the writing process this time round, resulting in the project's most polished and bombastic-sounding release so far. It's a far cry from the raw, lo-fi approach of their older material, boasting a clear, booming production that really emphasises the drums, but the overall sound is still as cold and uncompromising as ever. *Worldless* deftly walks the line between harsh, abrasive blasting and moody atmospherics.

FOR FANS OF: Abduction, Xasthur, Lamp Of Murmuur

KEZ WHELAN

WORLD SERVICE
Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

FORMLESS OEDON
Streams Of Rot
MEMENTO MORI

Formless Oedon hail from the Philippines, but these tracks could be resurrected relics from Finland's early 90s death metal scene, dripping with just the right amount of putrid slime and downtuned guitars.

OLIVIER BADIN

RISE TO THE SKY
Two Years Of Grief
MEUSE MUSIC/TRAGEDY PRODUCTIONS

It's the seventh album in less than four years for this Chilean solo doom-death project. Adept at hitting all the emotional bases, it wallows in romantic misery one minute, scampers with fetid fury the next.

CHRIS CHANTLER

SERPENT OF OLD
Ensemble Under The Dark Sun
TRANSCENDING OBSCURITY

While this Turkish quintet burrow down a familiar left-hand path of blackened death, the fevered delivery and caustic storms in their wake are awash in atmosphere and conviction.

JONATHAN SELZER

PRESS/CHUCK BRUECKMANN

DEVIN TOWNSEND
Devolution Series #3 - Empath Live In America
INSIDEOUT

Canada's prog metal maestro enters some altered States

First there was the acoustic show in Leeds, then the wonderfully titled *Galactic Quarantine* and now this: the third in Devin's *Devolution* series, recorded across his 2020 US tour cut short due to the pandemic. Described as a "free form" tour, the run had no setlist, backing or click tracks and each night was made up on the fly, which is why Devin and his band sound so organic during numbers like *Evermore*, *March Of The Poozers* and a joyous *Love?*. There's even a track titled *Fuck Around Section*, which, unsurprisingly, is self-explanatory. It's naturally loose in places and chaotic at times, but that's what gives *#3* much of its beauty: one of metal's greatest showmen having the time of his life and everyone onboard with him.

FOR FANS OF: Strapping Young Lad, Leprous, Tesseract

ELLIOT LEAVER

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Superunknown Redux
MAGNETIC EYE

Ufomammut and Darkher cast their third eye on Soundgarden

The latest in Magnetic Eye's cover series sees metal's underground take on Soundgarden's mid-90s smash. Ufommamut are first up, and their initially unrecognisable *Let Me Drown* is glacially slow, the riff eventually emerging from ominous ambience, swathed in monstrous fuzz. Somnuri are on the nose with *Mailman*, with that infectiously dour riff holding sway. Valley Of The Sun's radio rock rendition of *Superunknown* is toothless and Spotlights sound more like Silverchair on *Black Hole Sun*. Horseburner chuck all the crunch at *Spoonman*, and *Redux* closes strongly with a haunting, quietly urgent rendition of *Like Suicide* by alt-folk faerie Darkher. Ultimately, it's a mixed bag: too dirge-like for rock lovers, but doom-heads will revel in experiencing another mainstream smash corrupted by underground miasma.

FOR FANS OF: Monolord, Soundgarden, Elder

TOM O'BOYLE

VOIVOD
Morgöth Tales
CENTURY MEDIA

Quebec's cult avant-thrashers revisit their otherworldly outposts

Legendary Quebecois worldbuilders Voivod have steered a hugely influential and singular course across 42 years, from ragged sci-fi thrasher-punks to sinewy prog metal godheads. Showcasing nine pivotal tunes from nine pivotal albums between 1984-2003, the quirky quartet have sidestepped the usual pontifications about the artistic validity of re-recording golden oldies. That's not just because their early production often didn't wholly rise to the challenge of the material, but also because 2022's *Synchro Anarchy* proved that Voivod's star remains in the radiant ascendant. It also succeeds by rescuing overlooked tunes; 1991's *Nuage Fractal* comes alive in these smoother, weightier circumstances, as does *Rebel Robot*, distinguished by the finger-thunder of 'Jasonic' Newsted. Meanwhile, the all-new title track is a classically Voivodian dreamscape of stuttering rhythms and otherworldly atmospheres, setting the seal on one of the proudest reputations in metal.

FOR FANS OF: Gojira, Devin Townsend, Metallica

CHRIS CHANTLER

THE ZENITH PASSAGE
Datalysium
METAL BLADE

Progressive metal titans match their skills with a dearth of thrills

The bonafides of this ultra-talented LA quartet are unassailable. Three former members of The Faceless, who are also permanent or fill-in members of Cynic, John Frum, Bereft and Soreption, have gathered to do the expected. At first, they somehow manage to simultaneously make jaws drop in amazement while yawn in boredom with the ultra-technical, go-nowhere ennui of opener *The Axiom Of Error*. The following tracks – *Algorithmic Salvation*, *Lexicontagion*, *Deletion Cult* and *Divinertia II* – showcase the guitar sound's extreme staccato and the ability of the band to fluidly stop on a dime like King Crimson powered by Watchtower. This is where they prove there's life to be had in those who would suffocate vitality underneath a wet blanket of prodigious capability. Which, unfortunately, is precisely what happens far too often on *Datalysium*.

FOR FANS OF: Archspire, Meshuggah, Necrophagist

KEVIN STEWART-PANKO

Urne head out into the emotional wilderness

URNE
A Feast On Sorrow
SPINEFARM

Gojira-approved London trio consolidate their grief

IT'S TRITE TO say that great art comes only from pain, with many of music's greatest achievements born from places of resplendent joy. However, it's also undeniable that music from the heavier end of the spectrum so often channels anger, loss and despair into a cathartic release and memorable results. Having set an impressively high bar with long-gestating debut *Serpent & Spirit*, Urne's follow-up serves as a vehicle to release personal tragedy and anguish, while the bandmembers continue to wear their influences on their sleeves as readily as their hearts.

A Feast On Sorrow again miraculously and idiosyncratically weaves rock, metal and hardcore's finest moments through each of its eight songs, while still maintaining a cohesive approach. When it comes to genre, it would be churlish to pigeonhole this band. Within the elongated *A Stumble Of Words* alone, Mikael Åkerfeldt's most maniacal riffing collides with Gojira's grand sense of ceremony and the chaotic light and shade of Vision Of Disorder, with pained vocals and poignant lyrics on the verge of tearing themselves apart. It's an absorbing blend, with the continued Gojira nods hard to ignore, not least because they recorded in Joe Duplantier's New York studio, he handled the production, and then he took them out on tour.

While such an exponent of liberating mastery may have been a guiding hand, the sustained evolution of each member's skills culminates on the album's highlight, the epic closer *The Long Goodbye/Where Do The Memories Go?*. Whether it's James Cook's pummelling rhythmic drive and chaotic fills, Angus Neyra straddling the poignant melodies and wrought thrash maelstrom, or Joe Nally keeping his composure to deliver the heart-wrenching lyrics, it's an undeniable conclusion to an album that serves as a triumph through turbulence from one of Britain's brightest hopes.

FOR FANS OF: Mastodon, Inter Arma, Gojira

ADAM BRENNAN

PRESS/ANDY FORD

LIVE REVIEWS

DOWNLOAD 2023

DONINGTON PARK, DONINGTON

Metallica, Bring Me The Horizon and Slipknot headline an unforgettable 20th birthday blowout

THURSDAY

With more than 100,000 metal fans set to descend upon Castle Donington for Download Festival's four-day, 20th anniversary celebration, it was inevitable there would be some level of upheaval. Horror stories of motorists being stuck in six hours' worth of traffic getting on site are not uncommon. But, as Saxon once famously declared of the same grounds, the bands played on, starting in earnest with **CANCER BATS**. Even with strong winds diluting their sound on the second Opus Stage to a skeletal racket, the ferocity of their riffs – like a wild beast tearing meat off bone – is more than enough to churn the crowd into an animalistic frenzy. Sadly, however, they do get rudely shut off on the final song. Making his Download debut, **MAMMOTH WVH**, aka Wolfgang Van Halen, opens the main Apex Stage with Foo Fighters-like alt rock. He may only be two albums into his solo career, but Wolf's adept crowd control and the melodies of *Don't Back Down* paint a promising picture.

Menacing and moody, rising nu gen star **MIMI BARKS** spits out rapid-fire lines from the Dogtooth Stage with all the savvy of an alt Eminem, before hijacking the drums and beating out some punishing rhythms. Back on the Opus Stage, criminally underrated LA punks **THE BRONX** prove as gloriously chaotic and unpolished as they were when they first took our breath away two decades ago.

JINJER's debut 2019 Download performance saw them play the smallest tent. So, today's huge crowd and Apex Stage billing reflect just how much the Ukrainians' monstrous tech-groove metal has exploded over the last few years, with vocalist Tatiana Shmayluk proving a particularly mesmerising force of nature. Suitably hidden from the sun in a shadowland of her own – the Dogtooth Stage – **A.A. WILLIAMS** conjures a quiet storm, her songs brooding, tragic and ethereally cold. It's a spellbinding sanctum of darkly euphoric bliss.

HALESTORM's affable yet powerful set opens with a double whammy of *I Miss The Misery* and *Love Bites (So Do I)*, Lzzy Hale's raw, animalistic yowl and the band's supersize riffs landing with sledgehammer proficiency, even if the endless drum solos do drag on a bit.

Piggyback alien rides? Suited-up men in bald caps? Looking like they've just stumbled from another planet, **PUSCIFER** have landed on the Opus Stage with a mega-funky frenzy of Martian art rock, and it's wonderfully chaotic. **ALTER BRIDGE** have spent years marching up Download bills, and they delight a packed-out crowd with their tried-and-tested brand of polished metallic rock, a searing *Metalingus* a highlight. Future headliners? You never know.

Last-minute replacements for Five Finger Death Punch, **SKINDRED** reaffirm their status as Download's unofficial party band with an almighty set on the Opus Stage. Well-worn anthems *Nobody* and *That's My Jam* go down a storm, but it's the sea of whirled t-shirts above heads, aka The Newport Helicopter, during epic closer *Warning* – with guest vocalist Lzzy Hale – that provides the most enduring image.

On a different metallic vibe, but still unbounded fun, **PERTURBATOR** pelt the Dogtooth tent with currents of hypnotic and trance-inducing synthwave, as electronics pulse and distort like the sound of a futuristic, dystopian robotic scrapyard.

Fully lit up, **METALLICA**'s six giant video towers make Download look like an alien landing site rather than a music festival. The first of their two headlining sets sees them mixing the familiar – *Creeping Death, Fade To Black, Master Of Puppets* – with relative rarities like *Leper Messiah* and *King Nothing*, both dropped early, and a trio of impressive new songs: *Lux Aeterna, Screaming Suicide* and *Sleepwalk My Life Away*. James Hetfield, looking like metal's dad these days, points out this is the ninth time they've played Donington. It won't be long before they're back for the 10th.

THE SET

METALLICA (THURSDAY)

Creeping Death
Harvester Of Sorrow
Leper Messiah
King Nothing
Lux Æterna
Screaming Suicide
Fade To Black
Sleepwalk My Life Away
Orion
Nothing Else Matters
Sad But True
The Day That Never Comes
Blackened
Fuel
Seek & Destroy
Master Of Puppets

FRIDAY

NOVA TWINS' star has risen immeasurably in the four years since they last played here, and an impressively large crowd has amassed at the Apex Stage to mosh, bounce and boogie to their propulsive, genre-hopping alt rock bangers. Doom-punks **WITCH FEVER** call out religion, sexual harassment and the patriarchy during their incendiary Dogtooth set, vocalist Amy Walpole screaming, *'OFF WITH HIS HEAD!'* during a squalling *Bully Boy*. Equally incendiary, **PUPIL SLICER** have sunk huge hooks amid the mathy-grindcore maelstrom on their new album, *Blossom*, but while they incite massive circle-pits, the band still don't truly command the crowd sizes they're increasingly attracting. **UNDEATH** have no such issues. Vocalist Alex Jones whips up a veritable frenzy around his band's galloping death metal, as a seemingly endless wave of crowdsurfers ensures the set feels delightfully chaotic. **EPICA** look like they're playing an arena. Their drum/keyboard riser sits inside a metal nest, flanked by two towering, fire-breathing cobras. Firework showers go off, and closer *Consign To Oblivion* sees Simone Simons successfully orchestrating an "epic wall of death".

"We are your titans of British death metal, and we've come to crush your fucking skulls!" **INGESTED** might swagger like death metal Gallagher brothers, but they have the crowd – and songs – to back it up. Pig-squeals and breakdowns turn the Dogtooth Stage into a braying, bloodthirsty mob. The crowd may have thinned out, but Belgian post-rock trio **BRUTUS** are a revelation. Drummer/singer Stefanie Mannaerts is transfixing: the hurricane in the eye of their hurricane. Still in the Dogtooth tent, Simon 'Biffy Clyro' Neil is playing to a smaller audience than he's used to, as his side-band **EMPIRE STATE BASTARD** harsh everyone's mellow with split-personality spasmcore that looks more fun to play than it is listen to.

PENDULUM haven't released an album since 2010's *Immersion* and last played here in 2011, but they pull one of the biggest crowds yet. Hits *Slam* and *Tarantula* are weirdly absent, but they do bring out Matt Tuck – untethered from his guitar and buzzing with energy – for the new collab song

KATJA OGRIN

Metallica: two nights, two different setlists, all the metal

Sam Carter auditions for a Vegas residency

Epica brush up on their communication skills

Skindred: Benji Webbe spots a helicopter

Jinjer unleash their elemental power

Within Temptation take some liberties on the Opus Stage

Don't mess with Mimi Barks

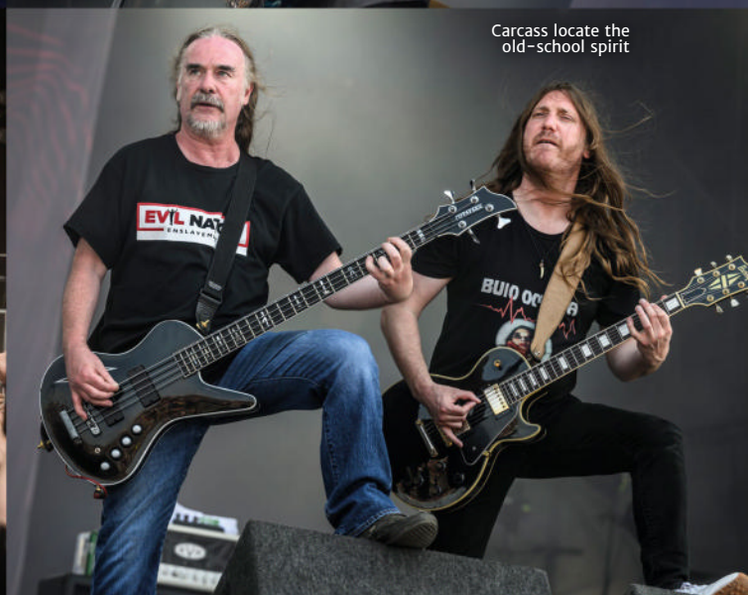
Ghost: Papa Emeritus IV strikes a pose

Evanescence: Amy Lee brings gothic glamour to the Opus Stage

"HU! HU! HU! HU!" Gala shows us how it's done

Nova Twins return as Download royalty

Parkway Drive's Winston McCall feels the love


Carcass locate the old-school spirit

Disturbed conquer the Main Stage once more

The stars align for Coheed And Cambria

Avatar's Johannes Eckerström channels some Wolverine vibes

Bring Me The Horizon: finally Download headliners

Halo. Could more new music be coming? On their last UK tour, **WITHIN TEMPTATION** stepped up to arenas, and today's set only cements their new status. From supercharged juggernaut *The Reckoning*, to the soaring pop of *Faster*, and the symphonic elegance of *Mother Earth*, every facet of the band's expansive sound is represented in one potent shot.

If 2022's *The Classic Symptoms Of A Broken Spirit* saw **ARCHITECTS** write arena-ready songs, their Metallica support slot's proven they work. Sam Carter makes their sub-headlining set look easy, swishing down the Apex Stage aisle in glittery black trousers and yelling, "It's push-mosh o'clock, and you're all fucking invited!" His scream in the middle of *Deep Fake* is brutal, while *Doomsday* is an emotional nod to late guitarist Tom Searle, who was still with us last time they played Donington.

Poor Ville Valo. A competing spot with Evanescence cuts **VV**'s crowd by half long before they finish. Those who remain delight in screaming along to the likes of *The Funeral Of Hearts*, *Rip Out The Wings Of A Butterfly* and even super-Sabbathy closer *Saturnine Saturnalia*. Barely speaking between songs, Ville's rake-thin silhouette and swaying movements lend him an otherworldly presence, like some Byronic waif about to disappear in a puff of smoke.

You could argue **EVANESCENCE** should be headlining the main stage. The goth metallers' Opus crowd is so huge, people are forced to watch them from behind food trucks, bellowing the words to timeless anthems *My Immortal* and *Bring Me To Life*, regardless of lines of sight. Over at the Dogtooth Stage, darksynth maestro **CARPENTER BRUT** has set phasers to stun. Stepping out of the sun and into the tent is like entering the depths of a French nightclub, rich 80s-tinged electronics bolstered by a dizzyingly atmospheric light show.

Against a backdrop of eye-popping production, **BRING ME THE HORIZON** prove emphatically why they deserve this debut headline slot. Delivering a bold set that stays true to their status as pop-metal innovators, Oli Sykes and co smash out banger after banger: *Teardrops*, *Shadow Moses*, pop-punk anthem *Lost* and batshit stomper *Kingslayer*, even bringing out Evanescence's Amy Lee for trance anthem *Nihilist Blues*. Flawless.

SATURDAY

Impervious to the heat, **FEVER 333**'s Jason Aalon Butler leaps off the speaker stacks, forward rolls and bursts through plumes of pyro. Moments later, he's screaming himself hoarse 20 feet in the air up one of the video towers. It's a constantly entertaining adrenaline rush. In the Dogtooth tent, safe from the hateful glare of the sun, **UNTO OTHERS** offer the combustible power of Graves-era Misfits with a striking *Lost Boys* aesthetic, the likes of *Nightfall* and *Heroin* attesting to their anthemic potential.

A massive circle-pit kicks up a vision-obscuring cloud of dust during **MUNICIPAL WASTE**'s set, but the band seem delighted. Tony Foresta thanks people for "supporting new thrash" – omitting the fact Waste have been producing top-tier party thrash anthems for more than 20 years now. Bless. With impassioned trap metal anthems aplenty, **KID BOOKIE**'s set is a raucous display of why hip hop and metal are kindred spirits. The Slipknot-approved rapper stuns, earning himself a mini wall of death and bounding into the thick of the pit for a climactic finish.

It might still be early, but that won't stop **ICE NINE KILLS** putting on a show. Screaming victims are slashed and killers stalk the stage as the Boston horrors slice through their gleaming, histrionic metalcore. Clad in masks and hockey jerseys, **BLACKGOLD** might look threatening but they bring the party. They film a music video for *Freak*, do their *I Ain't Goin' Out Like That* Cypress Hill cover, and get chased offstage by a 'policeman'.

CARCASS gather the hordes on the Opus Stage. *Corporal Jigsore Quandary* and *Exhume To Consume* turn out to be the day's most unlikely summer bangers, and even grumpy old Jeff Walker manages a half-smile.

It's testament to how tight **CLUTCH** are that even with a last-minute bass substitute – Fu Manchu's Brad Davis – the Maryland band sound insanely on point, funky openers *The House That Peterbilt* and *Escape From The Prison Planet* giving way to the rock'n'roll rage of X-*Ray Visions*, *Burning Beard*, *The Mob Goes Wild* and a storming *Pure Rock Fury*.

Purged screams. Wretched rapping. Ruptured, industrial beats. If you want to see the future of metal, look no further than **BAMBIE THUG** on the Dogtooth Stage. When the PVC-clad star-in-waiting brings out fellow nu gen upstart Mimi Barks, it feels like a nu era has arrived. Industrial goth metallers **MOTIONLESS IN WHITE**'s 2022 *Scoring The End Of The World* album has taken them to the next level. Newer tracks *Werewolf* and *Masterpiece* sound ravenous, while *Slaughterhouse*'s *'ONE MUTILATION UNDER GOD!'* provides a genuine moment.

Maybe the heat has beaten Download into submission, because the reaction to **ALEXISONFIRE** is far more muted than the Canadian post-hardcore veterans deserve. They sound wonderful, though, the angular sprawl of *Sans Soleil* and *This Could Be Anywhere In The World* things of beauty. The fast-rising **SPIRIT ADRIFT** attract a heaving Dogtooth crowd, conquering the stage with trad metal riffs and delightful stoner grooves.

It's their first UK show since Covid, and **DISTURBED** are still brilliant at being Disturbed, as well as being one of the few bands to successfully mix balladry with mosh. David Draiman delivers his usual "My brothers, my sisters, my blood" speech, and another one he's been doing about mental health. *The Sound Of Silence* legit brings Donington to a standstill, while *Down With The Sickness* is wild.

UK quartet **MONUMENTS** sound wonderful. After 16 years in the game, their progressive metalcore strikes the perfect balance between techy djent and inventive, catchy melodies and goes down a treat.

THE SET
BMTH (FRIDAY)

AmEN!
Teardrops
The House Of Wolves
MANTRA
Dear Diary, Parasite Eve
Shadow Moses
1x1
LosT
One Day The Only Butterflies Left Will Be In Your Chest As You March Towards Your Death
Nihilist Blues
DiE4u
Kingslayer
Follow You Drown
Throne
Can You Feel My Heart

THE SET
METALLICA (SATURDAY)

Whiplash
For Whom The Bell Tolls
Ride The Lightning
Until It Sleeps
72 Seasons
If Darkness Had A Son
Welcome Home (Sanitarium)
You Must Burn!
The Call Of Ktulu
The Unforgiven
Wherever I May Roam
Moth Into Flame
Battery
Whiskey In The Jar
One
Enter Sandman

GWAR play 24 hours later than they should have after one of their costumes was held up at Customs. Who knows what Customs made of it… Their Dogtooth set kicks off with a treasonous send-up of King Charles and ends in their customary carnage. Even with latest album *Vaxis II* dominating their set, **COHEED AND CAMBRIA** find massive singalongs in no short supply – after all, who can resist the pop-emo-prog stylings of *Beautiful Losers, The Suffering* or a titanic *Welcome Home*?

Back so soon? Oh, go on then. **METALLICA** have shuffled the deck for their Saturday night set, dropping in *Until It Sleeps, 72 Seasons, Moth Into Flame* and *Whiskey In The Jar*, before closing with the untouchable pairing of *One* and *Enter Sandman*. As with Thursday, there are few surprises, but then everyone's here purely to bathe in the power of the Earth's greatest metal band. When James Hetfield sings, *'We'll never stop, we'll never quit, 'cos YOU'RE Metallica',* during *Whiplash*, 100,000 chests swell with pride.

SUNDAY

Opening the Apex Stage on the last day of the festival, **BLOODYWOOD**'s set feels like a victory lap for everything they've achieved with debut album *Rakshak*. A massive, enthusiastic crowd chant their name as they thunder through their nu metal-via-New-Delhi tunes. An explosive upward trajectory means **LORNA SHORE** play to a huge early afternoon crowd. Probably the heaviest band to ever play Download's main stage, their apocalyptic deathcore, carried by Will Ramos's throat-shredding shrieks and squeals, incites pits so rabid many can't see the stage for dust. Moving beyond their viral hits, **THE HU** come across like a fearsome warrior unit pushing ever forwards. Barely speaking bar Jaya's early shout of "Let's rock!", their chanting and playing transports you to the Mongolian Steppe.

AVATAR's six-song set feels weirdly short, but maybe that's because half of it is the same as their 2018 appearance and lacks the ceremony of that day's rising throne and light-up sign. *Smells Like A Freakshow* and *Hail The Apocalypse* are still crowd-pleasers, though. **SOUL GLO**'s set is utter bedlam. Guitar solos are played behind heads, frontman Pierce Jordan almost gets the band kicked offstage scaling the scaffolding and the crowd *lose their minds*, the music almost secondary to the sheer – and undeniably delightful – anarchy unfolding onstage.

GREEN LUNG probably couldn't tell you the last time they played to a small festival audience. The Dogtooth is no exception as it packs out for their surprisingly accessible occult doom riffs. Meanwhile, **TERROR** incite a riot, their ultra-aggro hardcore getting bodies flying over the barrier within five minutes of their arrival.

Every second of **PARKWAY DRIVE**'s set is a bid for a future headline slot. By the end of opener *Glitch*, the Aussies have unleashed about 20 grand's worth of pyro, while their elite metalcore anthems, *Vice Grip, Prey* and *Crushed*, inspire ear-shattering singalongs. Only a fool would bet against them.

Masters of wacky electronicore, **ELECTRIC CALLBOY** are in pure party mode for their Avalanche Stage headliner, cramming in leftfield covers alongside their sparky, bass-led fare (*Frozen*, Darude, and the Backstreet Boys get the EC treatment). The sheer scale and ridiculous pace with which the German collective barrel through their set is as whiplash-inducing as their neon-meets-metal sound.

As **HATEBREED** bulldoze onto the stage with *To The Threshold*, the Dogtooth tent is overflowing with weary but exhilarated bodies. The crowd thins out as Slipknot's headline set approaches, but vocalist Jamey Jasta keeps the energy pumping with fierce, ultra-positive, unapologetic hardcore.

Whose idea was it to put **GHOST** on the second stage?! It's rammed as Papa skips on for *Kaisarion*. *'When Paradise is lost go straight to DONINGTON!'* he screams, to rapturous applause. Performing with their usual church set-up and with Papa donning his bat wings for *Cirice*, this feels every bit as good as their indoor shows – although, sadly there's no *Miasma*/Papa Nihil saxophone solo. "We usually resuscitate my old dad, but unfortunately we couldn't get him to work. There's a last time to everything, I promise you that," he says cryptically. Their cover of Genesis's *Jesus He Knows Me* – its UK live debut – induces dancing, *Mary On A Cross* is joyful, and pyro erupts for closer *Square Hammer*. Surely a main stage headlining spot is in their future.

In spite of the upheaval in **SLIPKNOT** right now – their departure from Roadrunner, the seeming departure of Craig Jones, Clown missing this month's shows due to his wife's medical situation – the band's return to Download seems to stabilise them. Roaring singalongs of *Psychosocial, Wait And Bleed* and an ear-obliterating *Duality* lend a sense of victory to the set, while more emotive fare *Yen* and *Snuff* offer brief respites from the chaos. Yes, it's a measured kind of chaos that we're all familiar with by this point, but that doesn't make it any less magic. The sight of a Clown mask during opener *The Blister Exists* – later confirmed to be Shawn Crahan himself, who's made it here tonight after all – reminds us this is *Slipknot at Download*, one of the 21st century's biggest metal bands on their chosen home turf, showing everyone exactly how its done. Explosions, flaming baseball bats and 'jump the fuck up' moments cement Donington's legend as heavy metal's field of dreams.

DAVE EVERLEY / ELEANOR GOODMAN / RICH HOBSON / DANNII LEIVERS / MATT MILLS / LIZ SCARLETT / IMS TAYLOR

Slipknot are once again in their element

THE SET

SLIPKNOT (SUNDAY)

The Blister Exists
The Dying Song (Time To Sing)
Liberate
Yen
Psychosocial
The Devil In I
The Heretic Anthem
Eyeless
Left Behind
Wait And Bleed
Unsainted
Snuff
Purity
People = Shit
Surfacing
Encore:
Duality
Custer
Spit It Out

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LIVE REVIEWS

MYSTIC FESTIVAL

GDAŃSK SHIPYARD, POLAND

Gojira and Ghost rise up from the ruins at Poland's spectacular metal fest

WEDNESDAY

A 20-minute walk from Gdańsk's exquisite Old Town lies the city's disused shipyard. Here, huge, rusting cranes offer their own, eerily impressive tribute to a bygone age, towering over abandoned warehouses begging to be used as a post-apocalyptic film set. Or a metal festival. Mystic's second year at this site has its eye on the future too, combining the potency of classic metal with the urgency of its new wave.

With the two main stages unused on the preliminary day, festival-goers can escape the sunlight in the Shrine Stage as **DEFLESHED**'s strident death metal, replete with skulls on spikes, entices an eager crowd pumped up for the days to come. Australia's brash, blackened thrash metallers **DESTRÖYER 666** storm onto the stage next and provide an hour-long warlike assault. Their tribute to Poland's speed metal gods of yore, Kat, stokes a packed crowd into another bout of frenzied fist-raising. On a more cosmic bent, **AKHLYS** stir up a cyclone of frenzied yet elevating black metal riffs, whose centre keeps shifting and momentum keeps building until the narrow Sabbath Stage feels like it's about to bust.

THURSDAY

The crowds gathering on the first day proper find the Main and second Park Stage still under construction, and the latter out of commission for the whole day. Although knocked from the Main Stage to the Shrine, **SPIRITBOX'S** modern, progressive tech-metalcore proves a hit with the younger crowd, Courtney LaPlante encouraging them to "shake their li'l Polish asses", and they graciously oblige. **TESTAMENT** take their Main Stage upgrade like it's their birthright. Propulsive, surging early tracks like *The New Order* still feel like nuclear-panic anthems that take on added resonance in these surroundings. On the Desert Stage, **HERIOT** take on their own, apocalyptic urgency as Debbie Gough and Jake Packer rage against dense, clotted riffs, all on the most unstable of terrain. They go down a storm, as do **EMPLOYED TO SERVE** on the Shrine Stage. The stop-start riffs constantly build up into something *momentous* – inflamed by Justine Jones's scabrous howl as shards of nu metal bounce get retooled into an acerbic, juggernaut groove.

Spiritbox: Courtney LaPlante shakes Mystic to its core

Getting their atavistic, death metal kicks on, **BLOODBATH** overwhelm the Shrine stage. Flanked by Katatonia's Jonas Renkse and Anders Nyström, Paradise Lost frontman Nick Holmes gargles over the likes of *Zombie Inferno*'s palpitating groove like the last three decades never happened. **GHOST** prove they're consummate headliners on the main stage. Every song – from an opening *Kaisarion* fusing let's-build-this-city futurism and rock history-steeped nostalgia, through to *Cirice*'s insidious stomp, to the closing, anthemic salve of *Square Hammer* – sounds like a classic from another, gilded age, as Tobias Forge teases the audience with a true showman's art.

THE SET

GHOST

Kaisarion
Rats
Faith
Spillways
Cirice
Hunter's Moon
Ritual
Watcher In The Sky
Year Zero
Miasma
Mary On A Cross
Mummy Dust
Respite On The Spitalfields

ENCORE

Kiss The Go-Goat
Dance Macabre
Square Hammer

FRIDAY

With the second Park Stage finally in service, **DISMEMBER**'s thrashy, d-beaten Swedeath invigorates the crowd and a large, frenzied pit breaks out. They migrate en masse to the Shrine Stage as compatriots **GRAVE** offer an often slower, more menacing take on the sound, Ola Lindgren's guttural vocals rising from the grimy onslaught of riffs. **ELECTRIC WIZARD**'s mantric doom is better suited to indoors, but they can still make your head want to implode on the Park Stage as trippy and b-movie visuals build up to a senses-saturating overload. Taake had a banjo, **CARPATHIAN FOREST**'s Nattefrost goes one better by tooting on a harmonica throughout their typically eccentric set, their punked-up black metal punctuated by quizzical outbursts and a feeling it could all fall apart at any moment.

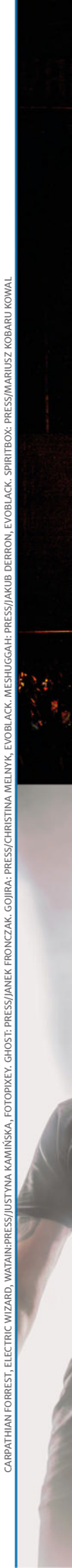
LUCIFER's blend of catchy 70s rock-infused heavy metal makes it difficult for anyone not to dance the whole set away, particularly as the band haul ass early along with the crowd to catch the Main Stage headliners. **DANZIG** are performing in the former city-state with which they share a name, making this occasion all the more special. Glenn Danzig himself is on form, blasting out heavy-hitting classics, including a powerful rendition of *Am I Demon* and the eternal, crowd-pleasing *Mother*. **WATAIN** see the night out, and despite too much reverb on Erik Danielsson's vocals, they're absolutely *feral* from the off. Erik sprays the pit with a mist of their signature spritz: (presumably) pigs' blood, before *Waters Of Ain* ends the set in equally heart-stopping and epic fashion.

SATURDAY

Bringing their sorrowful soundscapes to the Park Stage, **ALCEST** are a sombre affair, but a welcome respite for weary metalheads. They're jolted back into life by **VOIVOD**'s visionary, off-kilter thrash escapades, and the crowd chants for late guitarist Piggy are a singularly touching moment. **MESHUGGAH** deliver another defibrillating jolt of energy to the Park Stage. The nerve-jacking likes of *Rational Gaze* and *Future Breed Machine* set off the most brutal moshpits of the festival. Meanwhile, a younger crowd has materialised in the Shrine Stage, arms aloft and ready to be washed away by **SLEEP TOKEN**. If the motor is, ironically, Meshuggah's tension/release, floor-shaking groove, it's a springboard into more reverent territories. Amid a spectacular lightshow Vessel's wracked vibrato offers an emotional barometer, as stormfronts of contemporary pop and Leprous-style prog clash and rise up in an act of alchemy.

Main Stage headliners **GOJIRA** offer succour on a vastly expansive scale, those energy-surge riffs like a huge claw (pick-) sweeping to carry you to a higher state. Mystic has provided the most apt of settings, putting the transcendence of *Flying Whales*, *The Art Of Dying* and *Another World* into the sharpest relief, leaving **PERTURBATOR** to get the last crowds dancing manically amid the ruins.

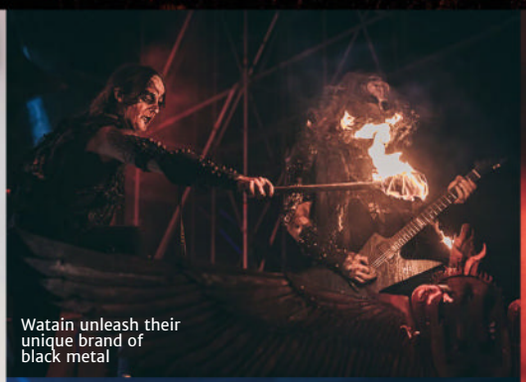
ALICE PATTILLO / JONATHAN SELZER



CARPATHIAN FORREST, ELECTRIC WIZARD, WATAIN: PRESS/JUSTYNA KAMIŃSKA, FOTOPIXEY. GHOST: PRESS/JANEK FRONCZAK. GOJIRA: PRESS/CHRISTINA MELNYK, EVOBLACK. MESHUGGAH: PRESS/JAKUB DERRON, EVOBLACK. SPIRITBOX: PRESS/MARIUSZ KOBARU KOWAL

Ghost fire up the faithful

Meshuggah: Sweden's tech-metal gods descend upon Gdańsk



Watain unleash their unique brand of black metal

Carpathian Forest: Nattefrost dishes out the devilry

Electric Wizard offer up a deluge of doom

Gojira bring Mystic to a higher dimension

Tenacious D: two twits in glorious tandem

TENACIOUS D

STEEL BEANS

O2 ARENA, LONDON

California's comedy rock heroes strike gold in Greenwich

FOR JUST A couple of lads wielding acoustic guitars, Tenacious D have done pretty well for themselves. The biggest indoor arena in London is packed to the rafters and D head honcho Jack Black will later inform us that this is his band's largest-ever headline show. Impressive. First though, one-man band **STEEL BEANS** is here to warm everyone up for the main event with his, rather unique, show. Dressed as Evel Knievel and perched on his drum stool while clinging to a guitar, it's pretty awe-inspiring that he manages to play his songs live. Trouble is, although his Eagles Of Death Metal by way of a one-man White Stripes act looks cool, you'd be hard-pressed to hum a single tune back.

You'd have to have some serious memory loss to forget **TENACIOUS D**, though. The roar that goes up as Jack Black and Kyle Gass stride onstage is deafening, and the continually ear-splitting volume of the singalongs during *Wonderboy, Kickapoo* and *The Metal* could drown out an Iron Maiden crowd. People fucking love this band.

It's easy to see why. Although the pair are Hollywood royalty, they offer a great deal of relatability, mixed with plenty of charm, and both possess genuinely funny bones. Jack, now sporting a beard of truly magnificent density, is the court jester, but Kyle's occasional, throwaway asides often provide the biggest belly laughs – like when he dryly mocks Jack's English accent. The set pieces are mostly a hit, but there's the occasional miss; the robot that dances throughout *The Metal* and the massive *Sax-A-Boom* solos are great, the over-egged broken pyro gag not so much.

None of this would mean much if The D couldn't back it all up with song power, and, in what's a rarity among comedy rock acts, they actually have some pretty killer tunes. They chuck out *Tribute* early on, and the O2 shakes with the ferocity of 20,000 voices bellowing it back. *Rize Of The Fenix* is fantastically catchy and, even though giving each bandmember a solo section of their own slows the pace to a crawl at the end of the set, *Double Team* is a proper, old-school, hard rock rager. They came, they saw, they rocked – typical D, in other words.

STEPHEN HILL

DEATH PILL

THE LEXINGTON, LONDON

Most bands celebrate the end of a tour. For these Ukrainian punks, the euphoria came right before it began. Singer/guitarist Mariana Navrotskaya, bassist Natalya Seryakova and drummer Anastasiya Khomenko were separated by the Russian invasion of their country (Mariana remained in Kyiv while Natalya fled to Australia and Anastasiya to Spain); despite releasing their self-titled debut album in February this year, they didn't reunite until this spring to play live. There's an air of solemnity around tonight, since this show concludes Death Pill's European run, with the members due to go their separate ways again. Technical troubles threaten to dampen the mood even further. The band are delayed half an hour, then the drums break, and the smoke machine basically blinds them. However, a rapt crowd and some emotionally plentiful songs carry the three-piece through this bittersweet evening. They play a flurry of chords and snarls, with *Would You Marry Me* serving as a love letter to Mariana's husband, and *Miss Revolt* unleashes an empowered, attention-demanding feminist cry. With the band frequently making evocative speeches about reuniting and the state of their country, tonight runs a rich emotional gamut in as little as 45 minutes.

MATT MILLS

VENDED

REBELLION, MANCHESTER

A Vended show is a guaranteed sweatpit, but that hasn't deterred fans from packing out Rebellion on a warm summer evening. A large part of the band's draw is their sons-of-Slipknot status, thanks to frontman Griffin Taylor and drummer Simon Crahan – and it's not like they're in any rush to disown their heritage. As they take to the stage, there's no mistaking those family ties. Griffin has swapped a mask for thick layers of blue body paint while bassist Jeremiah Pugh sports a muzzle, and opener *Ded To Me* and the possibly knowingly titled *Bloodline* are stuffed full of Slipknot's sonic DNA. But all doubts about whether Vended can step out of their parental shadows are soon snuffed out. Griffin exudes his own maniacal charm; when he twitches his head sideways and stares you down, commanding you to "GET IN THE GODDAMN PIT", it's terrifyingly thrilling. The set is equally as menacing, an onslaught of abrasive breakdowns and blastbeats that turn the moshpit feral. The band are left sweaty, smeared and raw, and the crowd eats it up. Beyond the spectacle, Vended's sound is strong enough in its own right.

CHERI FAULKNER

JAKE OWENS

Amon Amarth, in low-key production mode

KATJA OGRIN

AMON AMARTH

BLEED FROM WITHIN

CIVIC HALL, WOLVERHAMPTON

Sweden's epic Viking raiders make their way to the Midlands

Bleed From Within: if you're going to support Amon Amarth, bring a sail

FULLY CLOSED FOR renovation work in 2017, the Wolverhampton Civic Hall has now been open for a fortnight. Tonight is its first metal gig and, in an act of either inspired brilliance or utter lunacy, Amon Amarth have been given the prestige of kicking the gates back open to the legions.

Attendees of last year's Machine Head-assisted Vikings And Lionhearts tour can attest that the Swedes have an arena-worthy production these days, and while they aren't able to bring full pyro to Wolverhampton, **BLEED FROM WITHIN** prove you don't need flames to get a crowd worked up and sweaty. Latest album *Shrine* dominates the setlist, and with good reason. Floor-filling riffs, roaring singalongs and spine-menacing grooves aplenty fuel massive circle-pits throughout the set, and even with bassist Davie Provan sitting out the tour, the tightness of *I Am Damnation* and *Levitate* are sure signs that this band are stepping up as modern metal heavyweights.

AMON AMARTH have long since stepped up, and now have the kind of show that could give Ghost or Sabaton a run for their money. Towering blow-up statues and battling Vikings are only a small part of their live offering. *First Kill, Find A Way Or Make One* and *Deceiver Of The Gods* are all melodic death metal anthems, prompting thrusted fists and growl-alongs en masse like a pep talk in Mordor, the latter also bringing us a decidedly Eddie-like Loki that plays up to the Swedes' theatrical capabilities.

Wolverhampton give as good as they get. Swirling moshpits break out from opener *Guardians Of Asgaard* onwards, and long before frontman Johan Hegg can issue the command of *Put Your Back Into The Oar*, the entire dancefloor drastically reduces in height as metalheads sit cross-legged and row for their lives. Elsewhere, a heavy metal can-can breaks out during *Shield Wall*, simultaneously capturing both the energetic zeal and inherent ludicrousness of Amon Amarth live.

For his part, Johan bounds around like an excitable puppy throughout the set, as enthusiastic bellowing *Raise Your Horns* as he is hefting an explosive Mjolnir during closer *Twilight Of The Thunder God*. The flashing lights and smoke plumes might not be as explosive as their arena fare of 2022, but Johan's massive grin says it all. Even with reduced special effects, Amon Amarth are one of metal's most reliably brilliant live bands, still having more fun than just about anybody else.

RICH HOBSON

FIVE MINUTES WITH

DINO CAZARES FEAR FACTORY

The industrial metal pioneer on partying with Hetfield, turning down Bizkit and the future of Fear Factory

WORDS: MATT MILLS

Burton C. Bell left Fear Factory in 2020, and this year you announced a new singer, Milo Silvestro. What's the mood in the camp right now?
"It's a very good time to be in the band. We've done more than 50 shows with him and every day I pinch myself, look over at him and go, 'Wow, this kid can really sing!' People are loving him."

Before you found Milo, you said you were open to both male and female singers. Did any women get close to getting the job?
"Yes, a couple of women got really close. But, at the end of the day, I needed that one person who could really take Fear Factory to that next level, and I felt that Milo was that person. I could have gotten some well-known singer, but that singer would have already had their own voice that people know. I wanted to try something new, something fresh."

Speaking of auditions, you were once offered the chance to audition for Limp Bizkit and replace Wes Borland. Why did you turn it down?
"Because it was in 2001, and I felt that that style of nu metal had already hit its peak. Limp Bizkit's [sound] was already oversaturated and on its way down. I said, 'If I actually got that gig, it would have been career suicide.' Fear Factory, we were pretty much at our peak. And it's funny because, two years later, I was out of Fear Factory [he returned in 2009]."

You hung out with Faith No More a lot while recording 1995's *Demanufacture*. Any fun stories with those guys?
"I first met Jim Martin, their original guitar player, in 1988. I met James Hetfield at the same time, too – they used to come to my apartment to get hammered and sing Misfits at the top of their lungs. When we were making *Demanufacture*, Billy [Gould, Faith No More's bassist] would come over to our parties."

Weren't Bon Jovi recording next door to you?
"Bon Jovi had the other room and Faith No More had the barn outside.

"I THOUGHT, 'WHO WANTS TO SHOOT ME?'"

One time, our keyboard player, Rhys Fulber, is on a payphone, and a guy walks past who he thinks is a runner. He says, 'Hey, can you go to the deli and pick me up a ham and turkey? Hold the mustard, extra mayo.' Someone walks over to Rhys and goes, 'That's Jon Bon Jovi! What the fuck are you doing?!' Ha ha!"

You once tweeted in defence of Kourtney Kardashian wearing a Cannibal Corpse t-shirt and said, 'I wish she was wearing one of my band's tees.' Does Fear Factory have any famous fans?
"I've never seen somebody like Travis Barker or any of the Kardashians wear our stuff, but famous people like Kirk Hammett and James Hetfield, basically all the guys in Metallica, have said, 'We love what you've been doing and we love your records.' They took us on tour with them in 2010. I can't say we influenced them, because it was vice versa: they were a huge influence on us!"

You also tweeted a photo of your car's windscreen with a bullet lodged in it. What happened?!
"There was a park about a quarter of a mile from my house. Apparently there were some homeless people in the park and one of them had a gun. They shot in the air and it happened to come down on my car. Where my car was parked, there was a neighbour with a couple of kids who played in that area. I thought, 'Man, it's good the kids weren't back here!' My second thought was, 'Who the fuck wants to shoot me?!' Ha ha! The investigators asked if I had any enemies and I gave them some names… three."

Do you have more or less enemies nowadays?
"Less. I made up with one of them – unless he's just pretending to be my friend so he can get close enough to shoot me. Ha ha!"

Are there any plans for a new Fear Factory album?
"Oh, 100%! In the middle of July, we will be going in [to the studio] to do the new record. There will be a new song out before we hit the UK later this year."

FEAR FACTORY TOUR THE UK IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER. THEIR NEW REMIX ALBUM, *RECODED*, IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST

PRESS/STEPHANIE CABRAL

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